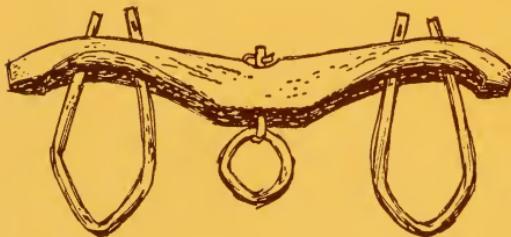


THE GROWTH OF  
LINCOLN'S FAITH

HARLAN HOYT HORNER



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To

Henrietta Colboan Horner

Grand-daughter and Author

of  
"Ann Frew"

To both of whom I am indebted  
beyond measure of words

Harlan Hoyt Horner

Albany, New York

January 19, 1939.





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### THE HOOSIER YOUTH

Statue on Entrance Plaza of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company Building, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Sculptor, Paul Manship. Photo by Courtesy of The Lincoln National Life Foundation.

# The Growth of Lincoln's Faith

HARLAN HOYT HORNER



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HORNER  
THE GROWTH OF LINCOLN'S FAITH

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Q Calhoun  
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To  
HENRIETTA CALHOUN HORNER



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## FOREWORD

FOR the last twenty-five years my principal avocation has been the accumulation of a Lincoln library and a study of all phases of the life of the martyred President. I have been especially interested in the books, pamphlets, and magazine articles on Lincoln's religion. Much has been written of a controversial nature. In the light of his career and of his assured place in history, it now seems to me idle to spend time upon questions which have troubled many Lincoln students.

Was Lincoln an atheist? Was he an infidel? Was he a spiritualist? Was he a Roman Catholic, a Quaker, a Baptist, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Universalist? Was he, indeed, a Christian?

It does not matter now what the answer is to any of these questions. There is a fundamental difference between creed and religion, between dogma and faith. Lincoln subscribed to no creed and was actuated by no dogma. His religion was rooted in the distinctions he made between right and wrong and his faith was based upon a consciousness of the supreme purpose of the Almighty. He

came in the fullness of his power under the great burden that was laid upon him to have a faith which literally moved mountains. This little book undertakes to trace the growth and the full blossoming of that faith. It was a slow process. The wonder of the child left many unanswered questions. The hunger of the youth was not fully satisfied. The doubt of the man was never entirely dissolved. The convictions of the lawyer and politician were years in crystallizing. The magnificent faith of the President, which transcended sectarianism, was an evolution and now makes the memory of the immortal Lincoln the common inheritance of good men everywhere who love their fellow men.

In these troubled days of the twentieth century, nearly seventy-three years after Lincoln's tragic death, whole nations led by influential dictators deny God, while still others seek through government to prescribe the God their people shall worship. Lincoln is certainly the greatest figure in our history since Washington. As the years go by he looms larger in world history. It is significant that when he came to the great crisis in his own life, which was also a crisis in the life of the Union he served, he turned chiefly to his Maker for counsel. The record is clear that

he was comforted, sustained, and guided by a sublime faith in Divine Providence.

For more than nine years, or constantly since our marriage, my wife, Henrietta Calhoun Horner, has shared fully my interest in building a Lincoln library and in pursuing the theme of this book. I have dedicated it to her because it has been made possible by her zeal and helpfulness.

H. H. H.

Albany, New York  
December 19, 1937



## CHAPTER I

### THE WONDER OF THE CHILD

**F**EW children get wholly satisfactory answers to questions which awakening life inspires in them. Childhood remains a period of wonder. It was markedly so in the early days of Abraham Lincoln. There was little in the one-room log cabin in which he was born to satisfy even the mere physical needs of a growing child. It is now believed that the cabin was about eighteen by sixteen feet in dimension. It had an earthen floor. A stone fireplace with a chimney made of sticks of wood chinked with clay occupied one end. A roughly constructed bed was built into one corner of the other end. A small square opening in the rear wall was covered with greased paper to let in the light and keep out the cold. The roof was made of boards held in place by poles. There was a door made of slabs. The furnishings were limited to a little bedding, a few dishes and cooking utensils, a table and some stools. Just how Nancy Lincoln kept her children warm and clean and properly fed, as she must have done, for they grew and thrived, nobody knows. It is hard in a totally

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different environment in another age to imagine the sheer material barrenness of that pioneer home. Despite the best efforts of father and mother, accustomed to primitive living and unacquainted with any other way of life, they must often have been hard put to it to satisfy the natural demands of the baby boy as he sought bodily sustenance and comfort.

Thomas Lincoln, the father in this household, came of good stock but signally failed to live up to his inheritance. He was "a wandering laboring boy and grew up literally without education. He never did more in the way of writing than to bunglingly write his own name." There is no evidence that he ever learned to read. He had no use for book learning, and the record shows clearly that he was more of a hindrance than a help to his son whose natural instincts led him to seek education. Thomas worked at various odd jobs after he grew up, was a carpenter of sorts and a half-hearted and unsuccessful farmer. He was always looking for a bend in the road to bring him fortune. His migrations from home to home and from state to state never profited him. The best that can be said of him is that he was honest and that he never harmed anyone.

There was never a close bond between

Abraham and his father. In December, 1848, when Thomas Lincoln was past his seventieth year, he caused a letter to be written to his son in Washington, D. C., then a congressman from Illinois, asking for twenty dollars to save his land from sale. The reply he received, while it granted the request, illy concealed Abraham Lincoln's judgment that his own father was a shiftless, improvident and irresponsible old man. Here it is:

Washington, December 24, 1848

My Dear Father:

Your letter of the 7th was received night before last. I very cheerfully send you the twenty dollars, which sum you say is necessary to save your land from sale. It is singular that you should have forgotten a judgment against you; and it is more singular that the plaintiff should have let you forget it so long, particularly as I suppose you always had property enough to satisfy a judgment of that amount. Before you pay it, it would be well to be sure you have not paid, or at least that you cannot prove that you have paid it.

Give my love to mother and all the connections.  
Affectionately your son,

A. Lincoln.

Thomas Lincoln never found the lucky bend in the road for which he always looked. He died on a Coles County farm, owned in

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part by his son, in southern Illinois, on January 17, 1851, in debt and unnoticed save by a few neighbors. His name would never have been known beyond his limited immediate circle and would now have long been forgotten if fate had not given him a son destined for immortality. Thousands of pilgrims visit his grave annually in the secluded little cemetery in Shiloh churchyard on Goose Nest Prairie, there to stand in reverence because of his one distinction—he was the father of Abraham Lincoln.

And if Nancy Hanks had not been the mother of Abraham Lincoln, she too would have found no niche in history, and the record of her brief life would now be lost entirely. Even as it is, she is more a myth than a reality. Very little is known about her. Biographers do not even agree about her appearance; and the ugly and painful assertion that she was an illegitimate child is to this day a subject of debate, despite the heroic efforts that have been made to give her an honorable lineage. The picture of Nancy reading the Bible to little Abe and his sister Sarah by the light of the fireplace in their Kentucky cabin home has become familiar the world over by frequent repetition. The claim that she taught Thomas Lincoln to read and write after they

were married has also been repeated many times. It would be pleasant to believe these things. Such writing as Thomas could do was learned before his marriage. Proof of this fact is to be found on his own marriage bond which he signed on June 10, 1806. Diligent search has never revealed anything but Nancy's mark, which is to be found on a deed executed by Thomas and Nancy on October 27, 1814, transferring a tract of land of some two hundred acres known as the Mill Creek farm to one Charles Melton. Thomas again signed his name and Nancy affixed an "X" to the document. Nancy's mark has come to light on a second document. The will of her uncle, Thomas Sparrow, executed on September 21, 1818, and probated on October 9 of that year, four days after her death, has recently been discovered in the courthouse at Rockport, Spencer County, Indiana. It bears the signature of David Casebier and the "X" of Nancy Lincoln as witnesses. There is, moreover, no proof that she could read and none that the family even possessed a Bible during their life in Kentucky.

Seeing that the sturdy Lincoln strain ran thin in the blood of Thomas Lincoln, posterity likes to believe that the unknown blood in Nancy Hanks's veins was of a finer quality.

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Indeed, that was Lincoln's own view, if the incident related by William H. Herndon may be accepted at full face value. Relating a conversation he claimed to have had with Lincoln in 1850 when they were riding together in a one-horse buggy on the way to attend court in Menard County, Illinois, Herndon said:

During the ride he spoke, for the first time in my hearing, of his mother, dwelling on her characteristics, and mentioning or enumerating what qualities he inherited from her. He said, among other things, that she was the illegitimate daughter of Lucy Hanks and a well-bred Virginia farmer or planter; and he argued from this last source came his power of analysis, his logic, his mental activity, his ambition, and all the qualities that distinguished him from the other members and descendants of the Hanks family.

Herndon also reported that Lincoln said of his mother upon this occasion: "God bless my mother; all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her."

Biographers have long had the habit of declaring that little Abe lived in his first cabin home on the Sinking Spring farm on the south fork of Nolin Creek with his parents and his sister Sarah until he was about four years old. Recent research seems to indicate that the move the family made to a new piece of land

on Knob Creek seven or eight miles north and east occurred when he was about two years old. This finding is confirmed by the fact that his earliest memories were of the Knob Creek home. It was just about as meager and destitute as the first one.

With his sister, he must have voiced in these early days many of the eager and irrepressible questions of childhood. Where does the wind come from? What makes the sun shine? Where does the road go? What makes the seed come up out of the ground? Why can't horses and cows and dogs talk? How does the moon get up into the sky? What is Christmas? These and a thousand other questions must have come to the lips of these Kentucky children and have remained partially unanswered, because neither father nor mother, nor any of the neighbors could satisfactorily answer them. It would be interesting to know, if the science of education could tell us, what superior educative and character-building values inhere in our modern methods and devices, almost wholly lacking in the Lincoln home, for satisfying the curiosity and for answering the never-ending questions of childhood. Little Abe must often have been fairly stifled with wonder at the unexplained things about that Knob Creek cabin door. Nature

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gives up her secrets slowly to a child who is mainly obliged to grope for them alone.

This second home was a little nearer to the thing the boy later learned to know as civilization. It was situated near a highway, one end of which was said to reach to Louisville and the other to Nashville. These places were even then known as cities. His parents could not tell little Abe about these far-off places, for they knew little about them. A man called a soldier appeared on the highway one day, so the legend goes, on his way home from something called war. Who was a soldier and what was war? The boy must certainly have asked these questions. He was to find the answer for himself in tragic years then long ahead of him. He had been told that people were kind to soldiers. He gave the man a fish he had just caught in Knob Creek. In later years he was to warm the hearts of thousands of soldiers who came to know him as "Father Abraham." Where the war was in which the passer-by had been engaged, what it was all about, who took part in it and for what purpose, nobody he knew could tell him.

A totally new and singularly strange wonder came into his life at Knob Creek. A baby brother came, named Thomas after its father, and disappeared shortly as mysteriously as it

had come. There is no record that this experience left a deep impression upon the mind of Abraham Lincoln. He knew that a baby brother came. He knew that the baby died. He must have asked himself, if he did not ask his father and mother, perplexing questions. What is it to be born? What is it to die and to be buried? He was to learn close at hand in his mature years partial answer to these questions. So industriously have biographers searched for facts surrounding the life of Abraham Lincoln that this baby brother Thomas has become a figure in history. There is no record of the exact date of the child's birth or death or place of burial, but students of Lincoln still hunt for such relatively insignificant facts. In the village bank at Hodgenville, Kentucky, the officers upon request will proudly bring forth from the vault a small field stone with the letters "T. L." carved upon it. The neighborhood believes that this stone marked the grave of little Thomas Lincoln. It was found, so the story goes, by workmen who were clearing underbrush in a private burying ground on the Redmon farm about a mile distant from the Knob Creek Lincoln home.

Civilization was feeling its way in Kentucky in Abraham Lincoln's boyhood. Schools

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and seminaries and academies were developing in the larger centers. Books were finding their way westward. A school came within the reach of Sarah and Abe. It was no doubt a subscription affair, common in those days. The children attended school for perhaps three months, all told, while the family lived on Knob Creek. All we know for certain is that the first teacher was named Zachariah Riney, and the second Caleb Hazel. Their names go down in history because they were Lincoln's first teachers, not because we know what, if anything worth while, they taught him. They probably furnished his first glimpse, however, through books of the great throbbing world which was almost completely hidden from his boyhood home. Even the crudest beginnings of A B C's, the joining together of a few words on a printed page to express an idea, and the discovery of numbers must have been welcomed by his eager mind. However competent those early teachers were in answering the persistent questions of a growing boy, we can well imagine he must have tested their skill as soon as he overcame his awe of them and his fright at the new and strange surroundings. Little did they or he realize that fifty years later the whole civilized world would be shocked at the news of his assassination and

that a volume of nearly a thousand pages would be required to record the messages of sympathy that came from other lands to his government upon his death.

One other stray incident finds its way through the haze surrounding Lincoln's life in his second childhood home. In the summer or early fall of 1816 Thomas and Nancy Lincoln seem to have joined the Little Mount Church, a few miles distant from their cabin, a congregation known as "Separate" Baptists. Tradition has it that Thomas was baptized in Knob Creek by a preacher by the name of William Downs. Baptizings in those days in Kentucky were social as well as spiritual occasions. Seven-year-old Abe could hardly have been left at home when that great event took place. It is easy to believe, in the light of his later convictions, that this baptismal ceremony raised new questions in his boyish mind to which he did not then find answer. He was in later life, after he became a national figure, to make very clear distinction between the form and substance of faith and to practice a Christianity wholly free from conventional rites or the restraints of any particular church membership.

What lasting influence, if any, the "Separate" Baptist affiliation of his parents had

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upon this small Kentucky boy we do not know. The Bible was literally the creed of this branch of the church. The discipline of the church was very severe. "Frolicking and dancing" were forbidden, intoxication and profane language were condemned and quarreling with one's neighbors came under the ban. There is no positive evidence of the degree of the religious devotion of Thomas and Nancy in these days, but diligent search by many students has revealed no indication of a lack of faithfulness to the tenets of the church of their choice. They were simple-minded folk, unable to read, and responsive mainly to emotional experiences. Any effort to invest this period of Lincoln's boyhood with unusual religious training is pure supposition. His parents were faithful church members. When that is said, the dependable record is complete.

It would almost seem as if Thomas Lincoln felt that he needed spiritual support for a new venture in his life. About the time he joined the church he was planning to leave Kentucky to make a new home in the wilderness of Indiana. "This removal," Lincoln wrote forty-four years later, after he had been nominated for the Presidency, "was partly on account of slavery, but chiefly on account of the

difficulty in land titles in Kentucky." His going was also part and parcel of his roving disposition and of the primal urge of the pioneer to venture into new lands. The story that whatever rights he had in the Knob Creek farm were traded for a few barrels of whisky, in those days the chief substitute for money, has been challenged by recent research but has long been accepted by the biographers.

It must have stirred Abraham Lincoln's mind anew to watch his father build a flatboat on the bank of the Rolling Fork, two and a half miles from their cabin. It was enough to make any observer ask questions. The Rolling Fork found its way into the Salt River, which in turn ran into a great stream known as the Ohio River. This small boy must have watched with strange emotions the departure of that rude craft bound for the Ohio River and the then distant land on the farther shore known as Indiana. The barrels of whisky tumbled into the water, so we are told, shortly after the journey began, but were salvaged by the dogged man who at least had resolution enough, in this instance, to stick to his purpose.

While Thomas Lincoln was landing his household goods and his whisky—if he had any—in Indiana and finding his way through the

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woods to the spot where he decided to stake a claim, some fifteen miles from the Ohio River, Nancy and Sarah and Abe were getting ready to go with him, upon his return, into the new land. Their getting ready was very simple. There was little to take and little to leave behind. It is believed that it was early in December, 1816, that they set out, family and all their belongings on horseback bound for the ferry on the Ohio River, Abe perched behind his father and Sarah behind her mother. Historians do not agree as to the route the family took from Knob Creek to the Ohio. The simple fact is no one really knows. For that matter, they may have traveled in a wagon rather than on horseback. They could hardly have dreamed that more than a hundred years later men would be seriously concerned in trying to discover the route they took and their means of travel. What pangs of regret, what thoughts of the future, passed through the boy's mind as this eventful journey began we shall never know. He saw for the first time the great broad Ohio. He must have known boyish fear when the ferry set out for Indiana. He must have wondered what was to be found when they should reach their destination in the thick woods which they penetrated.

Thomas Lincoln did not take the precaution to stake his claim near a spring, as more prudent early settlers were accustomed to do. He just came to a halt in the woods and hurriedly set up a lean-to or open-faced camp in which the family lived the first winter. It must have been hard for the boy, and for his sister and his mother as well, to understand the wisdom of that change from a bit of tillable soil and cabin with a roof and four walls in Kentucky to an open camp in the heart of the woods in Indiana at the beginning of winter. Thomas Lincoln was looking for another bend in the road.

The next three years were perhaps the hardest and bitterest in Abraham Lincoln's life, though he was to face in manhood great sorrow more than once and harder days than come to most men. Thomas Lincoln's disposition to let life find its way with the least possible effort was abundantly demonstrated in this period. In the summer of 1817 he did contrive to build a log cabin, said to have been eighteen by twenty feet, with a loft overhead reached by pegs fastened into the wall. But when the second winter came the cabin had no floor, no door, no window, and the roof was not yet finished. Wild game was abundant and Thomas spent more time with his gun

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than with his tools. He did manage to clear a patch of ground in the woods for corn and vegetables.

It was a rough, hard life and it soon began to tell on Nancy Lincoln. In the autumn of 1818 a strange disease called "milk sick" came into the neighborhood. It got its name from the fact that it attacked cattle, particularly milch cows, as well as human beings. The mystery has now been solved by modern medical science. White snakeroot poisons animals that eat it and human beings contract the disease by drinking milk from poisoned cows. In those days the disease was usually fatal. In October of that year Nancy Lincoln came down with it. It was thirty-five miles to the nearest doctor. In seven days she was gone. The wonder of death with new and tragic force came into the life of Abraham Lincoln. He watched his father fashion a coffin for his mother out of rough boards, and with his sister Sarah followed their mother to her grave as the coffin was drawn on a sled by Thomas Lincoln to the burial place on a knoll not far from the cabin.

Lincoln was now nearly ten years old. He could understand the awful earthly finality of death and feel the pangs of great sorrow. As he watched his father fill the grave his boyish

heart must have been stirred with inexpressible anguish. The one retreat, the one comforting resource in his life was gone. A boy of ten can have rebellion in his soul against such a cruel experience. He undoubtedly asked himself, without finding answer, why the God in whom his mother believed had taken her away from him and Sarah when they so much needed her.

Some weeks or months after this pathetic burial the Rev. David Elkin, who served the church of which Thomas and Nancy were members in Kentucky, on a visit to Indiana, preached a funeral sermon at the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Biographers and churchmen vainly laboring to make the boy appear to be something he was not have perpetuated the unfounded story that Abraham's first letter was written to the Rev. Elkin begging him to come to Indiana to conduct a funeral service at his mother's grave. There is no basis in fact for this story. It is not even certain that he was yet able to write legibly. Nothing is gained by any attempt to make him out up to this period in his life as different from any other boy reared in like conditions. That he loved his mother deeply and felt her loss keenly we have every reason to believe. And yet it must be recorded, he grew to man-

hood, rose to distinction, became President of the United States, and it apparently never occurred to him to mark his mother's grave. It was not until long after his death that her grave was marked by strangers who sought to honor her memory because of her illustrious son. Posterity finds a way to forgive Abraham Lincoln for this oversight, as it now generously does for all the shortcomings of his character which were inherent in his brooding, melancholy nature. The people of the Commonwealth of Indiana, atoning for him, have pledged themselves forever in the maintenance of the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Park to keep fresh the memory of the fragile pioneer woman who bore so great a son. Childhood with its wonder and its unanswered questions ended for Abraham Lincoln at his mother's grave that afternoon in October, 1818, and his eager, hungry, yearning youth began.

## CHAPTER II

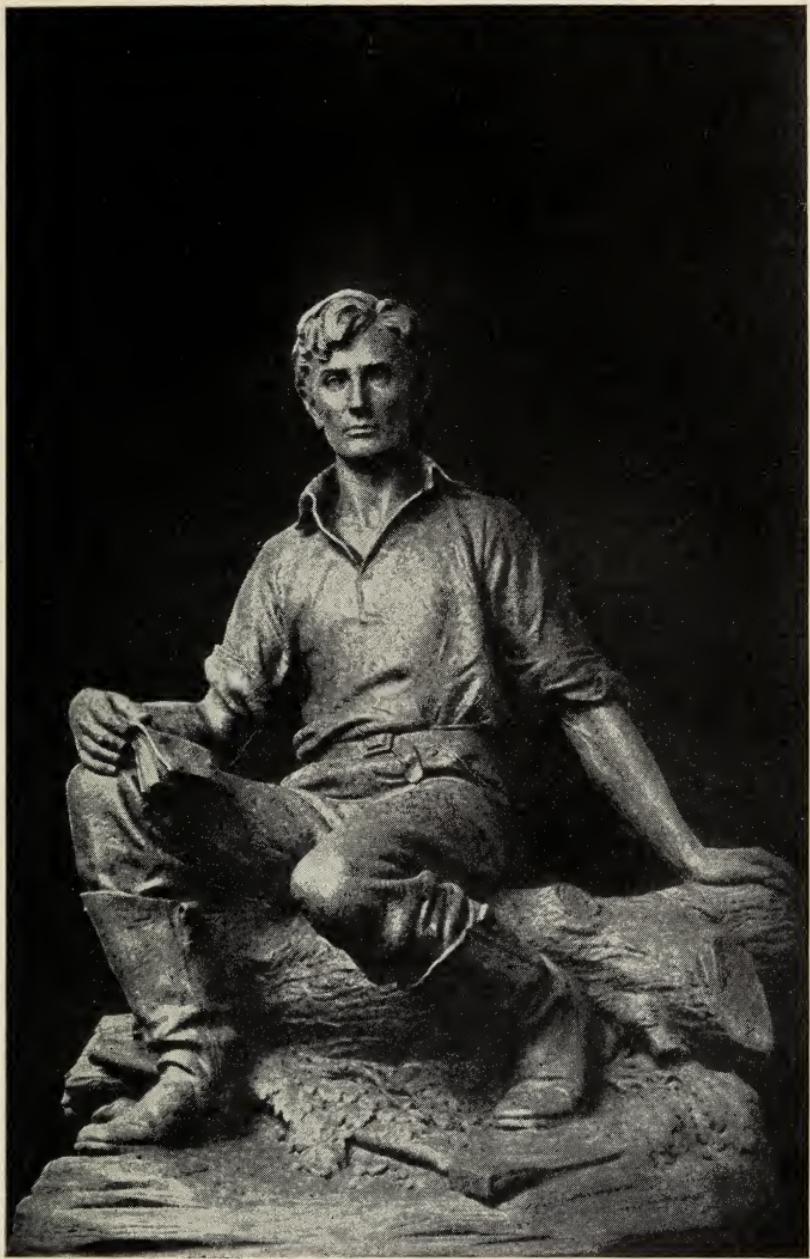
### THE HUNGER OF THE YOUTH

**A**BRAHAM LINCOLN was older than his years at ten. He had already known privation and great sorrow. His early experiences had toughened and hardened him. Nevertheless, he still had strong need for a mother. He came to be a man who loved contact with his fellow human beings. The death of his mother left a great void in his life. He wanted and greatly needed sympathy and companionship and understanding. Thomas Lincoln had little to give and no disposition to sympathize with his son. He treated Abe throughout his boyhood and youth roughly at times and always with a strange indifference. The barrenness and emptiness of that Indiana home were borne in more heavily than ever upon Abe and his sister Sarah the year after Nancy Lincoln died. These uncared-for children almost ran wild. Thomas Lincoln and Dennis Hanks, who had come from Kentucky to live with them, managed to provide wild game for the larder and Sarah did the best she could with the cooking. It was a hard, bitter year, especially for children without the

softening touch a mother could bring even in such a wilderness home. The wisest thing Thomas Lincoln ever did in his whole aimless life was to go back to Kentucky and bring home a stepmother for his children.

Sarah Bush Lincoln came with Thomas in mid-winter of 1819-20 bringing what must have seemed to Sarah and Abe very great riches. She had pots and pans, a bureau, blankets, a feather bed, and three children of her own to add to the household. Overnight the family was increased from four to eight. Both adults and children must have practiced the homely virtues of patience, restraint, and unselfishness, for history records that this family lived together in peace for several years.

Mrs. Lincoln brought more than material wealth with her from Kentucky. She brought a genius for making even a crude frontier home comfortable. Thomas was set to work at once to put a floor in the cabin, to fix up the loft for comfortable sleeping quarters, and to make some much-needed extra furniture. She brought a passion for cleanliness, and the squalor of the cabin promptly disappeared. Sarah and Abe, no doubt, experienced a season of cleansing and blossomed out in new clothes. She brought a cheerful disposition and a heart big enough to find place for two



### YOUNG LINCOLN

Statue in Delaware Park, Buffalo, New York. Photo by courtesy of Bryant Baker, Sculptor, Gainsborough Studios, New York City.



lonesome children in addition to her own. She brought healthy ideas of frugality and industry, and Thomas Lincoln sharpened up his tools and looked for carpenter work among the neighbors. He also enlarged his patch of land for a garden and for corn. Life took on a more comfortable aspect for the whole family. From the very day of her arrival Sarah Bush Lincoln filled a need in the life of Abe. She understood the boy, mothered him, and cared for him exactly as if he were her own. His hungry heart warmed under her ministrations. There was always a sympathetic relation and a complete understanding between them. Flat on his back on the cabin floor with a book in his hand, even when he was needed in the cornfield, as was often the case, he never was disturbed. She served as an undefined and perhaps unrealized spiritual anchorage for him in his formative years whose value can never be measured.

Forty years after she first comforted him, Lincoln journeyed from Springfield to Coles County, Illinois, to bid farewell to his step-mother before leaving for Washington to become President of the United States. On the way he told a traveling companion of the comfort and encouragement she had brought to him many years before and declared that she

was the best friend he ever had. She outlived her illustrious stepson nearly four years and after his death paid tribute to his memory in these familiar words:

Abe was a poor boy, and I can say what scarcely one woman—a mother—can say in a thousand: Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused, in fact or appearance, to do anything I requested him. I never gave him a cross word in all my life. . . . His mind and mine—what little I had—seemed to run together. He was here after he was elected President. He was dutiful to me always. I think he loved me truly. I had a son, John, who was raised with Abe. Both were good boys; but I must say, both now being dead, that Abe was the best boy I ever saw, or expect to see.

That she gave satisfying answer to the hunger of his youth for human companionship and understanding seems clearly established by the record. Pilgrims to the spot where she is buried by the side of Thomas Lincoln in the churchyard on Goose Nest Prairie and to the house near by, where Lincoln last visited her, pay tribute to a stepmother who was mother to the utmost to the boy who became President.

There was another hunger in the youth of Abraham Lincoln. It was the burning desire to know. Very early he developed a curiosity,

which soon became a passion, to discover the secrets hidden between the covers of a book. His formal schooling in Indiana was almost as brief and as incidental as it had been in Kentucky. Abe and Sarah trudged to a "blab" school two or three miles from their cabin home for a few weeks in the winter of 1818-19. Lincoln was then in his tenth year. He did not go to school again until he was about fourteen, when he went for a short time.

In his autobiography, written for campaign purposes in 1860, Lincoln gives us this picture of his schooling in Indiana and of his entire education:

While here Abraham went to A B C schools by littles, kept successively by Andrew Crawford, —— Sweeney, and Azel W. Dorsey. He does not remember any other. The family of Mr. Dorsey now resides in Schuyler County, Illinois. Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to one year. He was never in a college or academy as a student, and never inside a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of education he has picked up. After he was twenty-three and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar—imperfectly, of course, but so to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress. He regrets his want of education, and does what he can to supply the want.

Despite this meager period of formal instruction he did somehow early learn to read and write. The books that fell into his hands were well calculated to satisfy his intellectual hunger. The list of books the youth literally devoured has been made familiar by frequent repetition. He read repeatedly the Revised Laws of Indiana, which he borrowed from a neighbor, a volume of nearly five hundred pages containing the constitution and the current statutes of the state, the Act admitting Indiana, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States with the first twelve Amendments and the Ordinance of 1787.

Sarah Bush Lincoln could not read, but she sensed the value of books and brought what was then regarded as a "library" with her from Kentucky. In this small library were *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Sinbad the Sailor*, and Aesop's *Fables*. About this time also Thomas Lincoln seems to have acquired a Bible, the first that he had ever owned. There is every evidence in Lincoln's mature literary style and in the allusions in his public papers and addresses that he was strongly influenced by Aesop's *Fables* and the Bible. There is no evidence, however, it may be said in this connection, that he was stirred in any spiritual

sense by his intensive reading of the Bible in this period. The great soul of him was as yet unconsciously unfolding.

Another book which made a profound impression upon him was Weems's *Life of Washington*. On his way to Washington to assume the Presidency in 1861, he recalled the book in an address before the Senate of New Jersey and said:

May I be pardoned if, upon this occasion, I mention that away back in my childhood, the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, such a one as few of the younger members have ever seen—Weems's *Life of Washington*. I remember all the accounts there given of the battle-fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the struggle here at Trenton, New Jersey. The crossing of the river, the contest with the Hessians, the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single Revolutionary event; and you all know, for you have all been boys, how these early impressions last longer than any others. I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that these men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing—that something even more than national independence; that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come—I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people

shall be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle.

Other books we now know he almost literally made a part of himself were Bailey's *Etymological Dictionary*, Grimshaw's *History of the United States*, Scott's *Lessons in Elocution*, or *Selections of Pieces in Prose and Verse for the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking*, the *Kentucky Preceptor*, by an unknown compiler, containing essays on Credulity, Haughtiness, Industry, and Indulgence and other like topics.

We are apt, in what we believe to be a more enlightened age, to regret, as Lincoln did himself, that he did not receive in his formative years a more thorough education in a formal way. In the light of his subsequent accomplishments, who can say the books he fortunately devoured in his youth did not provide adequate intellectual discipline for his eager, acquisitive mind? What better library could he have had for that period in his life? He wanted almost fiercely to know and the means of knowing, through fortunate Providence, came into his hands.

Looking back now with our intimate knowledge of Lincoln's subsequent accomplishments and his place in world history to those early days of his struggle for an education in the wilds of Indiana, we can well believe that a kindly Providence hovered over him. There was an inescapable orderly logic, as we now see it, about the eagerness of this rawboned youth to find answer to the riddle of life which confronted him. He wanted, as we have seen, to know. He wanted also—and it was a fortunate characteristic of his entire life—to express himself to others. This urge for self-expression and for being understood by others was manifested very early. Speaking upon another occasion about his schooling and about his desire to understand what he heard and to be understood in what he said, he remarked to a friend:

I never went to school more than six months in my life, but I can say this: that among my earliest recollections I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I do not think I ever got angry at anything else in my life; but that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down and trying to make out what

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was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings.

I could not sleep, although I tried to, when I got on such a hunt for an idea until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over; until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north and bounded it south, and bounded it east and bounded it west.

There was opportunity even in those early pioneering days in Indiana for an ambitious youth to "bound" his ideas in the presence of others. By his fifteenth year he was undertaking to make speeches or to tell stories to hold the attention of the neighbors or any audience he could get together. A tree stump or a rail fence was platform enough at first to induce him to draw his fellow workers in the fields or woods together to enable him to practice oratory upon them. Later the grist mill or the blacksmith shop and the general store at Gentryville furnished larger and more appreciative audiences. He formed the habit early also of "bounding" his ideas on paper as well as before his friends and neighbors. We are told that he wrote a weighty essay in 1827

or 1828 on national politics which was printed in a Spencer County newspaper. It is significant that this "long, thin, leggy, gawky boy dried up and shriveled," with less than a year of schooling to his credit, should at eighteen or nineteen be writing an essay on government and recording his views, as reported, that—

The American Government was the best form of Government in the world for an intelligent people, that it ought to be kept sacred and preserved forever; that general education should [be] fostered and carried all over the country; that the Constitution should be [held] sacred, the Union perpetuated, and the laws revered, respected, and enforced.

About thirty-five years later as President of the United States he was to sign the famous Land Grant Act enacted by Congress, which was the initial impetus for our present far-flung system of state universities and to be at that time the chief instrumentality of his government for the enforcement of its laws and for the perpetuation of the Union.

His youthful hunger for human companionship, his eagerness to learn, and his passion for accurate and forceful self-expression, naturally led to another quest in this period of his life. The primal urge of the pioneer in his blood made him want to discover something

about the world beyond the confines of Gentryville, or even of Spencer County. Wood-chopping and hoeing corn were never welcome tasks to him. He got away from this work for the first time in his seventeenth year and enlarged his knowledge of local geography by hiring himself as an assistant to James Taylor, who operated a ferryboat across the Ohio River near the mouth of Anderson's Creek. For this labor he got the munificent sum of thirty cents a day.

About this time, having visions of a business venture of his own, he built himself a scow, in which he proposed to take travelers out to board passing steamers in midstream. Many years afterward he told his Cabinet in Washington how he earned his first dollar in less than a day. The story comes down to us through Secretary Seward, who gave the following account of it:

"I was contemplating my new flatboat," Lincoln said, "and wondering whether I could make it stronger or improve it in any particular, when two men came down to the shore in carriages with trunks, and looking at the different boats singled out mine and asked, 'Who owns this?' I answered somewhat modestly, 'I do.' 'Will you,' said one of them, 'take us and our trunks out to the steamer?' 'Certainly,' said I. I was glad to have the chance of

earning something. I supposed that each of them would give me two or three bits. The trunks were put on my flatboat, and the passengers seated themselves on the trunks, and I sculled them out to the steamer.

"They got on board, and I lifted up their heavy trunks and put them on deck. The steamer was about to put on steam again, when I called out that they had forgotten to pay me. Each of them took from his pocket a silver half dollar and threw it on the floor of my boat. I could scarcely believe my eyes as I picked up the money. Gentlemen, you may think it was a very little thing, and in these days it seems to me a trifle; but it was the most important incident in my life. I could scarcely credit that I, a poor boy, had earned a dollar in less than a day—that by honest work I had earned a dollar. The world seemed fairer and wider before me. I was a more hopeful and confident being from that time."

The operation of his own flatboat on the Ohio gave Lincoln his first contact with the force of the law. A ferryman from the Kentucky side of the river, disturbed by the prospect of competition in carrying passengers out to passing steamers, brought Lincoln before a Kentucky Justice of the Peace for operating a ferry without a license. Lincoln claimed that it was not against the law to take passengers out to midstream to board steamers which did not make a landing or wait for a ferry. His competitor insisted that Kentucky jurisdiction

extended to low-water mark on the Indiana shore. The Justice of the Peace ruled that taking passengers to passing steamers in mid-stream was not "setting them over" the river and that Lincoln was, therefore, not guilty of violating the statute.

It was the river which gave young Lincoln his first glimpse of a city. At nineteen he had never been in larger places than Boonville and Rockport, Indiana, and these centers were then mere hamlets with perhaps twenty-five or thirty families. James Gentry, the proprietor of the general store at Gentryville, was accustomed to send produce for sale or exchange by flatboat to New Orleans. In the spring of 1828 Gentry hired Lincoln to go with his son on a flatboat trip to New Orleans. Lincoln acted as bow hand and was paid at the rate of eight dollars per month for the entire time of the round trip. The young adventurers put out from Gentry's landing on the Ohio near Rockport and floated down the Ohio and the Mississippi to the metropolis of the South. Thus a new and larger world was opened up to Lincoln. For the first time, he saw a large city and the method of life of an educated and well-to-do people. He saw large river craft, seagoing vessels, stores and warehouses, and a mixture of strange people. Dis-

posing of the cargo and leaving the flatboat behind, the two young navigators returned by steamer. Lincoln must have seen slaves in New Orleans, but there is no evidence that he was impressed in any way by slavery at this time. Years later he recalled what must have been an eventful experience in these words:

When he was nineteen, still residing in Indiana, he made his first trip upon a flatboat to New Orleans. He was a hired hand merely, and he and a son of the owner, without other assistance, made the trip. The nature of part of the "cargo-load," as it was called, made it necessary for them to linger and trade along the sugar coast; and one night they were attacked by seven Negroes with intent to kill and rob them. They were hurt some in the melee, but succeeded in driving the Negroes from the boat, and then "cut cable," "weighed anchor," and left.

For two or three generations in the pioneering days of the nineteenth century many of the early settlers believed that there was better land and easier life in the next state west. Indeed, it was this persistent belief, coupled with the courage to act upon it, that occupied, settled, and peopled the whole of our country beyond the Alleghanies. It was natural that the migratory spirit of Thomas Lincoln should lead him to believe in the stories that came back to Indiana about the golden opportuni-

ties in Illinois. He had a patent for half of the hundred and sixty acres he had originally entered in Indiana. He had purchased an adjoining tract of twenty acres. Thus he owned one hundred acres. So far as is known he disposed of his land holdings for a horse and one hundred and twenty-five dollars in the winter of 1829-30, and made ready to seek fortune anew in Illinois.

In the spring of 1830, shortly after Abe had passed his twenty-first birthday, a little cavalcade of wagons drawn by oxen set out from Gentryville for Illinois. The two daughters of Sarah Bush Lincoln had been married in the meantime and they, with their families, joined the trek westward. Lincoln's sister Sarah, who had also married, had previously died in childbirth. There were thirteen in the party. Lincoln drove one of the teams of oxen, and peddled along the way needles, pins, thread, buttons, and other notions in which he had invested the thirty-six dollars he possessed in his own right at the age of twenty-one. More than a hundred years later communities both in Indiana and in Illinois contested for the honor of announcing that "Lincoln passed this way."

Thomas Lincoln and his family spent the first year in Illinois on a bit of land overlook-

ing the Sangamon River, a few miles from Decatur, Illinois. Abraham helped to break up fifteen acres of land and cut trees and split rails to fence it. He soon began, however, to think of leaving the home circle and looked for odd jobs in the neighborhood. In the spring of 1831 he was hired by one Denton Offut to help pilot a flatboat load of merchandise from a point on the Sangamon River, near the village of Springfield, down the Sangamon, the Illinois and the Mississippi to New Orleans. Thus he made a second trip to the great Southern trading center. Biographers have labored to show that Lincoln was greatly impressed with the evidences of slavery he saw on this second trip to New Orleans, but there is little in the record to prove that he then made the high resolutions attributed to him to hit slavery hard if he ever got the chance. In July, 1831, Lincoln bade good-by to Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln, then established on another bend in the road in Coles County, Illinois, and made his way to New Salem, a little hamlet on the Sangamon near Springfield, where he expected to get work in a store about to be opened by Denton Offut.

The avowed purpose and possible justification of this little book is to present the evolution of Lincoln's faith and his final depend-

ence upon Divine Providence. The wonder of the child and the hunger of the youth reveal no evidence of significant spiritual awakening. The inner soul of him yet slumbered. He had had contact, after a fashion, with religious teaching. Thomas and Nancy Lincoln carried their letters of dismissal from the Little Mount Church in Kentucky with them to Indiana, but there was no church within reach of their new home. The Little Pigeon Church, a congregation of Primitive Baptists, was established in the neighborhood the year after Nancy Lincoln died. The early records of this church have been preserved. They show that Thomas was received "by letter" and his second wife, Sarah Bush Lincoln, "by experience" on June 7, 1823. Thomas became an officer in the church and was active in its affairs until he migrated to Illinois. Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln carried letters with them to Illinois from the Little Pigeon Church commending them to any other Primitive Baptist Church.

Abe attended services with the family but did not join the church. The distinguishing quality of the Primitive Baptist preachers in those days was the volume of sound they could produce in calling sinners to repentance. It was natural that a youth of Lincoln's type

should regard the church service as an entertainment. The story has come down that he was an excellent mimic and that at fifteen he could reproduce to the merriment of his hearers any sermon he had heard. None of the early witnesses were able to give definite account of his youthful religious views. "The good old Two-Seed, Hardshell, Anti-Missionary, Predestinarian Gospel," thundered from the pulpit of the Little Pigeon Church, amused this lanky fun-loving youth but left him spiritually unawakened. Youth, without intelligent religious training and without serious or settled religious views, ended for Abraham Lincoln the day in July, 1831, he reached New Salem to stop "indefinitely and for the first time, as it were, by himself," and the doubting, drifting, melancholy period of his young manhood began.

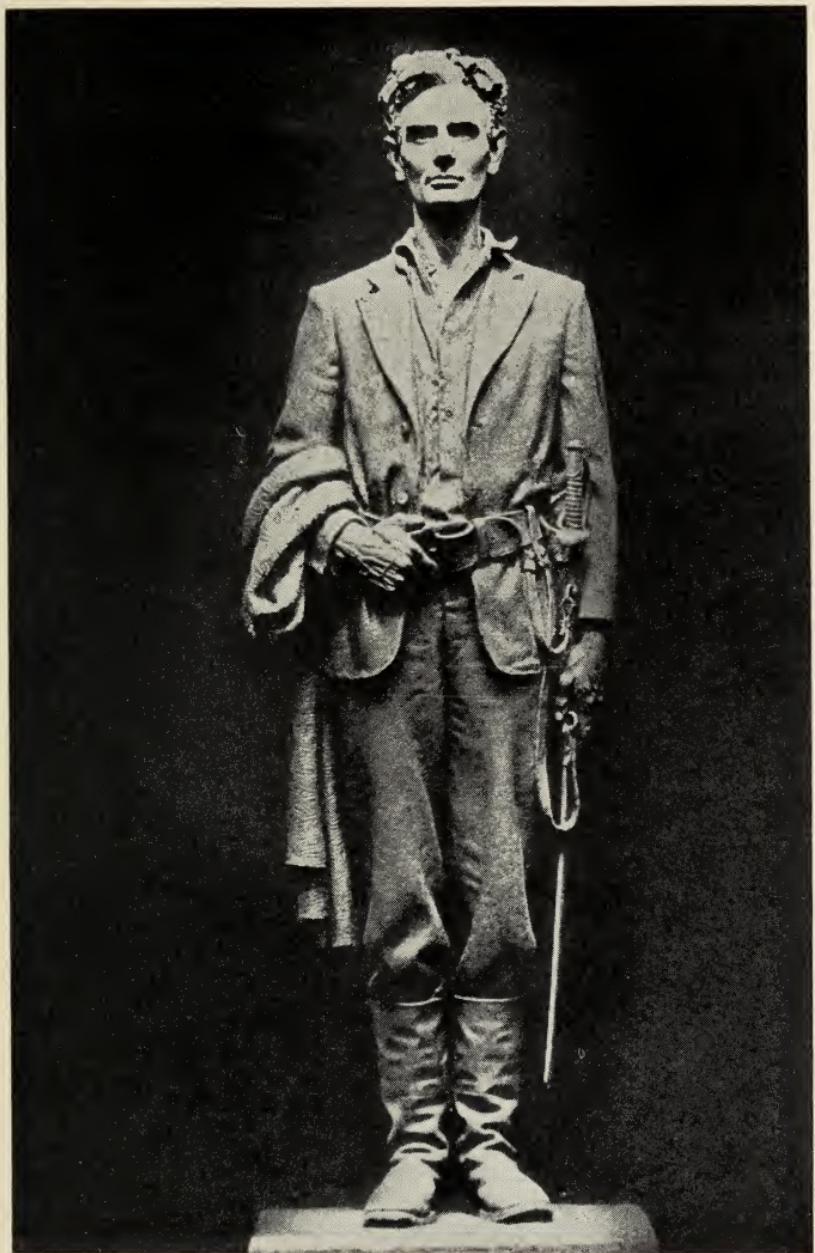
## CHAPTER III

### THE DOUBT OF THE MAN

THE period of greatest doubt and uncertainty in Lincoln's life covers his New Salem experience and his earlier years in Springfield. This trying period continued for eleven years, from his twenty-second to his thirty-third year, or until he was married and settled in a home of his own. These eleven years brought him some failures, some successes, great personal sorrow and, at times, downright despair.

Getting ahead in the world was a difficult task for him. His business ventures at New Salem were uniformly unsuccessful. Denton Offut established a general store in New Salem and rented the sawmill and gristmill on the Sangamon River near by. Lincoln clerked in the store upon the bluff and rustled bags of meal and sawlogs down at the mill on the river. Offut's business "petered out" and Lincoln was out of a job.

The famous Black Hawk War intervened in the spring of 1832 and saved Lincoln for a short time from utter destitution. He enlisted on April 21 for thirty days, re-enlisted



### LINCOLN THE CAPTAIN

Statue on the Site of Old Fort Dixon, Dixon, Illinois. Sculptor, Leonard Crunelle. Photo by Courtesy of Hintz Studio, Dixon, Illinois.



on May 27 for twenty days, and again on June 16 for thirty days. He was elected captain of his company upon his first enlistment and took great pride in this first real distinction in his life. His meager knowledge of military tactics did not dismay him. Herndon tells a story of Lincoln's experience in drilling his company. In marching one morning at the head of his men in lines of twenty abreast, he suddenly found it necessary to lead his company through a gateway which was much narrower than the lines. Not knowing what order to give to change the formation so that the company could march through the gateway in orderly fashion, the captain faced his troops and shouted: "Halt! This company will break ranks for two minutes and form again on the other side of the gate."

Lincoln was mustered out of the service on July 16, 1832, at Black River, Wisconsin. His horse was stolen and he returned in easy stages on foot and by canoe to New Salem. Twenty years later a generous government granted him for military service two tracts of public land in Iowa amounting to one hundred and sixty acres. That Lincoln did not overestimate the importance of his brief military experience is evidenced by his reference to it in a speech he made in Congress in 1848 in dis-

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cussing the part General Cass played in the Mexican War. Lincoln said:

By the way, Mr. Speaker, did you know I am a military hero? Yes, sir; in the days of the Black Hawk War I fought, bled, and came away. Speaking of General Cass's career reminds me of my own. I was not at Stillman's defeat, but I was about as near it as Cass was to Hull's surrender; and, like him, I saw the place very soon afterward. It is quite certain I did not break my sword, for I had none to break; but I bent a musket pretty badly on one occasion. If Cass broke his sword, the idea is he broke it in desperation; I bent the musket by accident. If General Cass went in advance of me in picking huckleberries, I guess I surpassed him in charges upon the wild onions. If he saw any live, fighting Indians, it was more than I did; but I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes, and although I never fainted from the loss of blood, I can truly say I was often very hungry. Mr. Speaker, if I should ever conclude to doff whatever our Democratic friends may suppose there is of black-cockade federalism about me, and therefore they shall take me up as their candidate for the Presidency, I protest that they shall not make fun of me, as they have of General Cass, by attempting to write me into a military hero.

Back from his efforts at being a soldier, Lincoln entered into partnership with one William Berry, and established a general store in New Salem. Their ambition apparently exceeding their combined business judgment,

Berry and Lincoln, with nothing much more than promises to pay, bought out all their competitors. All accounts seem to indicate that Berry drank too much of the hard liquor the firm offered for sale, and Lincoln spent too much time out in front of the store reading, or gossiping with the passers-by. In any event, this infant monopoly in storekeeping did not prosper and the partners sold out, taking a note in payment. Before the note came due, the new owners failed and fled the country. Then Berry died and Lincoln came out of all of these transactions with obligations of \$1,100. He called these accumulated burdens his "national debt." This debt hung over him for nearly twenty years before he finally was able to pay the last penny of it. His absolute honesty remained unquestioned.

Managing a business of his own not yielding stable income, Lincoln turned again to odd jobs. He husked corn and split rails for neighboring farmers, clerked for a time in a new store, and took whatever work came to hand. A real godsend came his way when he was made postmaster of New Salem on May 7, 1833. The slight compensation was very helpful to a hard-pressed young man, and the postmaster had the privilege, which Lincoln greatly enjoyed, of reading the newspapers

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before delivering them to their owners. Stories have been handed down of how he went about the village carrying the mail in his hat. Government records indicate that he served until the office was closed on May 30, 1836. Government inspection of post offices was not frequent in those days. Several years later a postal inspector called on Lincoln in his law office at Springfield and asked for an accounting. From an old trunk in his office Lincoln produced a package wrapped in rags from which he counted out the exact amount the government demanded, some seventeen dollars.

Shortly after he became postmaster another opportunity to add to his meager income came Lincoln's way. There was great demand for surveying in the new Illinois country. The County Surveyor, John Calhoun, needed an assistant and appointed Lincoln to the place. The postmaster was wholly unacquainted with the principles of surveying, but under the tutelage of the local schoolmaster, at whose house he was boarding, he went to work with a will and was soon able to give good account of himself in the field. The compensation depended upon the amount of land to be surveyed. A surveyor able to do independent work was allowed two dollars a day for ex-

penses and the fee for laying out a quarter section of land was two dollars and a half.

But even the fees from the two official positions of postmaster and assistant surveyor, enhanced by the three dollars a day paid a representative in the General Assembly of Illinois, did not free Lincoln from his "national debt." He had no capacity for saving in these days and was careless about his obligations. One of the notes he signed in his ill-fated transaction with Berry fell due. Judgment was had against him and his horse and surveying instruments were taken. A friend came to his rescue, paid the debt, and restored his property. Several years later Lincoln met this obligation in full. Throughout this period of his young manhood his income was insufficient to meet his simple needs. Indeed, when he set out to take his seat in the Legislature in November, 1834, at Vandalia, then the capital of the state, he had to borrow two hundred dollars to get a new suit of clothes and to pay his expenses. And when he finally left New Salem in April, 1837, to take up his residence in Springfield, he rode into the new capital city of the state on a borrowed horse, his license to practice law and his extra clothing, his sole possessions, in his saddlebags. He was then twenty-eight years of age. This familiar ac-

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count of his introduction to Springfield, given by Joshua F. Speed, presents a vivid picture of his status in life at this time:

He had ridden into town on a borrowed horse, with no earthly property save a pair of saddlebags containing a few clothes. I was a merchant at Springfield, and kept a large country store, embracing drygoods, groceries, hardware, books, medicines, bedclothes, mattresses—in fact, everything that the country needed. Lincoln came into the store with his saddlebags on his arm. He said he wanted to buy the furniture for a single bed. The mattress, blankets, sheets, coverlid, and pillow, according to the figures made by me, would cost seventeen dollars. He said that was perhaps cheap enough; but small as the price was, he was unable to pay it. But if I would credit him until Christmas, and his experiment as a lawyer was a success, he would pay then; saying in the saddest tone, "If I fail in this, I do not know that I can ever pay you." As I looked up at him, I thought then, and I think now, that I never saw a sadder face.

I said to him, "You seem to be so much pained at contracting so small a debt, I think I can suggest a plan by which you can avoid the debt, and at the same time attain your end. I have a large room with a double bed upstairs, which you are very welcome to share with me."

"Where is your room?" said he.

"Upstairs," said I, pointing to a pair of winding stairs which led from the store to my room.

He took his saddlebags on his arm, went upstairs, set them on the floor, and came down with

the most changed expression of countenance. Beaming with pleasure, he exclaimed:  
"Well, Speed, I'm moved."

Lincoln was more successful in his young manhood in politics than in business. Just one month after his twenty-third birthday, on March 9, 1832, a few weeks before he enlisted in the Black Hawk War, he addressed a circular to the "People of Sangamon County" announcing his candidacy for representative in the next General Assembly of the state. He set forth his views upon public affairs, advocated the building of highways and railroads, the clearing and development of navigable streams, and especially the Sangamon River, condemned high rates of interest, and proposed a law to fix the limits of usury. His comment upon the subject of education is of especial significance. He said:

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advan-

tages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the Scriptures, and other works both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.

For my part I desire to see the time when education—and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry—shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate that happy period.

Returning from the Black Hawk War only a few days before the election in August, 1832, Lincoln as the Whig candidate for the Legislature found himself pitted against the Rev. Peter Cartwright, a famous itinerant Methodist preacher, as the Democratic candidate. Lincoln was defeated but was highly gratified at the support of his neighbors in New Salem, two hundred and seventy-seven of the two hundred and ninety votes being in his favor. This was the only political defeat he ever experienced by direct vote of the people.

He was not discouraged by this initial defeat and came up for the same office again in August, 1834. He was elected and took his seat in the Legislature in the Capitol at Vandalia on December 1 of that year. He was re-elected successively in 1836, in 1838, and in 1840, serving in all four full terms.

Lincoln's record in the Legislature, while it undoubtedly served to broaden his experience and to increase his confidence in himself, was much like that of any other member of that body. A few incidents got firmly recorded in history. In 1836 there were nine representatives in the General Assembly from Sangamon County, the largest delegation in the state. They were all over six feet in height and were known as the "Long Nine." They banded together to move the capital from Vandalia to Springfield. Lincoln got the chief credit for their accomplishment when the capital was finally moved in 1837. There seems no doubt that he did his full share in the log-rolling that took place.

Lincoln took a stand on a vital issue of public concern in 1837 which gave some intimation of what was to be expected of him on the slavery question in the future. Elijah P. Lovejoy, publisher of an antislavery newspaper, had been killed by a mob at Alton and his press destroyed. The murder did not excite great protest at the time, particularly in political circles, because of the large and influential proslavery vote in Illinois. It was not surprising, therefore, for the General Assembly to pass resolutions condemning abolition societies and by implication, at least, holding

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them responsible for such disturbances as the murder of Lovejoy. The following resolutions were passed on March 3, 1837:

*Resolved* by the General Assembly of the State of Illinois:

That we highly disapprove of the formation of Abolition societies, and of the doctrines promulgated by them.

That the right of property in slaves is sacred to the slaveholding states by the Federal Constitution, and that they cannot be deprived of that right without their consent.

That the General Government cannot abolish slavery in the District of Columbia against the consent of the citizens of said district, without a manifest breach of good faith.

That the governor be requested to transmit to the states of Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, New York and Connecticut a copy of the foregoing report and resolutions.

Lincoln had the courage with one fellow member of the General Assembly to place upon the record the following protest against these resolutions:

Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that

the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has power under the Constitution to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of the district.

The difference between these opinions and those contained in the said resolutions is their reason for entering this protest.

DAN STONE.

A. LINCOLN.

Representatives from the County of  
Sangamon.

Thus at twenty-eight years of age Lincoln recorded himself on the slavery issue. No member of the General Assembly and no other citizen of Illinois then dreamed that Lincoln would stand resolutely by this policy for the next quarter of a century and depart from it only as President of the United States in the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as a war measure to save the Union.

Lincoln's experience in the Legislature gave him his first real start in life. When his meager training and equipment for public

service is taken into account, his success was phenomenal. When he took his seat in the Capitol at Vandalia on December 1, 1834, he was a bankrupt grocery keeper, postmaster of a small river hamlet, surveyor's assistant, ex-captain in the Black Hawk War, without profitable business or profession and with very uncertain prospects. He emerged from the last session of the Legislature he attended as a member on March 1, 1841, having been four times elected to the office, having been floor leader of the Whigs in the House and twice their candidate for Speaker. In this period he had located at Springfield, where he was welcomed and honored for his services in removing the capital from Vandalia to that city. He had been admitted to the bar and had entered into a partnership with one of the leading lawyers of the state. In seven years his fortunes had vastly changed. From a comparatively unknown roustabout opportunist in a small river hamlet he had in these years become a well-known resident of the capital city of his state with a considerable reputation in state politics with promise of wider recognition. True, his income was still meager because his interest in politics was greater than his interest in law.

Lincoln's greatest sorrow and his deepest

despair in these formative years of his young manhood came through his relations with women. There is in the biographical record a fragmentary story of a boyhood attachment back in the Indiana days to a girl by the name of Katie Roby. There is no record, however, that Lincoln carried any lasting memory of this relationship into his mature years. His first love affair, which is now familiar to the whole wide world, was with Ann Rutledge at New Salem. When Ann and Abe first met, she was nineteen and he was twenty-three. Their first attachment sprang out of the fact that Ann was disconsolate because one John McNamar, with whom she fell in love at seventeen, had gone back to New York state, his earlier home, to visit his people and had apparently forgotten her. Living at her father's tavern and seeing her discomfiture, Lincoln sympathized with her. That they came at length to love each other truly all biographers seem to agree. The untimely death of Ann Rutledge on August 25, 1835, brought Lincoln the second great sorrow of his life. The death of his mother at nine years of age had been a great blow. The death of his sweetheart at twenty-six was almost more than one of his impressionable temperament could bear. The love story of Ann and Abe has

been magnified by many writers beyond its due proportions and the effort to attribute Lincoln's lifelong melancholy moods to this experience in his life has not been sustained. That he loved the girl, that he was well-nigh prostrated at her death, seem true. The record is equally clear that he took up anew his duties as postmaster, surveyor, and handy man at New Salem just as any other normal person would have done after great misfortune.

In less than a year he was involved in another love affair. This time it was with Mary Owens, who came from Kentucky to visit her sister at New Salem. His heart was not really enlisted. He got himself involved, felt that he was under moral obligation to keep his engagement, and was so crude and awkward a lover as to advise the lady of his choice not to have him. Lincoln was at his worst in this incident. He did, indeed, as he said, make a fool of himself. In a letter to his friend, Mrs. O. H. Browning, written after he was "out of the scrape," he recounted all the circumstances. One could wish that this letter had never been written or that it might never have come to public notice. It is now firmly embedded in history and is reproduced here only because it shows clearly the state of mind

through which Lincoln was passing at this period in his life.

Springfield, April 1, 1838.

DEAR MADAM:

Without apologizing for being egotistical, I shall make the history of so much of my life as has elapsed since I saw you the subject of this letter. And, by the way, I now discover that, in order to give a full and intelligent account of the things I have done and suffered since I saw you, I shall necessarily have to relate some that happened before.

It was, then, in the autumn of 1836 that a married lady of my acquaintance and who was a great friend of mine, being about to pay a visit to her father and other relatives residing in Kentucky, proposed to me that on her return she would bring a sister of hers with her on condition that I would engage to become her brother-in-law with all convenient despatch. I, of course, accepted the proposal, for you know I could not have done otherwise, had I really been averse to it; but privately, between you and me, I was most confoundedly well pleased with the project. I had seen the said sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and I saw no good objection to plodding life through hand in hand with her. Time passed on, the lady took her journey, and in due time returned, sister in company sure enough. This stomached me a little; for it appeared to me that her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing; but, on reflection, it occurred to me that she might have been prevailed on by her married sister to come, without anything concerning me ever having been

mentioned to her; and so I concluded that, if no other objection presented itself, I would consent to waive this. All this occurred to me on hearing of her arrival in the neighborhood; for, be it remembered, I had not yet seen her, except about three years previous, as above mentioned. In a few days we had an interview; and, although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was oversize, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an "old maid," and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation; but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features, for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles, but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased with her. But what could I do? I had told her sister I would take her for better or for worse; and I made a point of honor and conscience in all things to stick to my word, especially if others had been induced to act on it, which in this case I had no doubt they had; for I was now fairly convinced that no other man on earth would have her, and hence the conclusion that they were bent on holding me to my bargain. "Well," thought I, "I have said it, and, be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it." At once I determined to consider her my wife; and, this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in

search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects. I tried to imagine her handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself that the mind was much more to be valued than the person; and in this she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted.

Shortly after this, without coming to any positive understanding with her, I set out for Vandalia, when and where you first saw me. During my stay there I had letters from her which did not change my opinion of either her intellect or intention, but on the contrary, confirmed it in both.

All this while, although I was fixed, "firm as the surge-repelling rock," in my resolution, I found I was continually repenting the rashness which had led me to make it. Through life, I have been in no bondage, either real or imaginary, from the thrall-dom of which I so much desired to be free. After my return home, I saw nothing to change my opinion of her in any particular. She was the same, and so was I. I now spent my time in planning how I might get along through life after my contemplated change of circumstances should have taken place, and how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much, perhaps more, than an Irishman does the halter.

After all my suffering upon this deeply interesting subject, here I am, wholly, unexpectedly, completely, out of the "scrape"; and now I want to know if you can guess how I got out of it—out, clear, in every sense of the term; no violation of

word, honor or conscience. I don't believe you can guess, and so I might as well tell you at once. As the lawyer says, it was done in the manner following, to-wit: After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do (which, by the way, had brought me around into the last fall), I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay; and so I mustered my resolution, and made the proposal to her direct; but, shocking to relate, she answered, No. At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of her case; but on my renewal of the charge, I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up; at which I very unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. And, to cap the whole, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls; but this can never with truth be said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of

marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me.

When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me. Give my respects to Mr. Browning.

Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN.

Mrs. O. H. Browning.

Lincoln was once more to suffer humiliation and great mental anguish before he finally found himself at the altar. He was thirty and Mary Todd was twenty-one when she came to Springfield from Lexington, Kentucky, to visit her sister, Mrs. Ninian W. Edwards. It was a prompt but strange love affair. Lincoln, crude, uncouth, big, awkward, unaccustomed to any of the niceties of social life, a struggling young lawyer with scarcely a place to hang his hat. Mary Todd from a well-to-do, aristocratic Kentucky family, graduate of a finishing school, an excellent French scholar, at home in the ballroom, small, plump, vivacious, ambitious, stubborn, determined. There is no accounting for cupid's behavior. In a little over a year from the time of their first meeting they had become engaged, had quarreled, had made up and had quarreled again. It was a stormy courtship.

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Finally, so one story goes, the wedding day was set for January 1, 1841. The time arrived, the guests assembled at the Edwards home in Springfield, and the bridegroom did not appear. The authorities do not agree upon what actually happened. There is no positive evidence that the wedding day was fixed. Lincoln himself was responsible for calling the day in question, "the fatal first of January, 1841." The whole affair will always be shrouded in mystery. It was nothing short of a brain storm on Lincoln's part. A characteristic period of depression followed the abrupt breaking off of his engagement. The depth of his despair—perhaps the blackest time in his whole career—was voiced in a letter to John T. Stuart, his first law partner, on January 23, 1841, which read in part:

For not giving you a general summary of news, you must pardon me; it is not in my power to do so. I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on the earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell; I awfully forbode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better, it appears to me. The matter you speak of on my account you may attend to as you say, unless you shall hear of my condition forbidding it. I say this because I fear I shall be unable to attend to any business here,

and a change of scene might help me. If I could be myself, I would rather remain at home with Judge Logan. I can write no more. Your friend, as ever,

A. LINCOLN.

It is hard to believe but in a few weeks after the "fatal first of January, 1841," this "most miserable man living" was actually courting Sarah Rickard, the seventeen-year-old sister of his landlady. For several months Sarah was beguiled by the attentions of a man almost twice her age. It is believed that there was an engagement between them. It only goes to show that Abraham Lincoln was quite human, and oftentimes as foolish as he was inept in dealing with women.

But he did not put Mary Todd out of his mind. They were brought together again in strange fashion. On August 27, 1842, Lincoln wrote a letter to the *Sangamo Journal* lampooning a political opponent by the name of James Shields. The letter was signed "Aunt Rebecca." Shortly thereafter a second letter holding Shields up to ridicule appeared in the *Journal*. It also was signed "Aunt Rebecca," but had been written in a spirit of mirth by Mary Todd and a friend. Shields was outraged and demanded the name of the

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author. Lincoln gallantly assumed authorship of both letters and Shields challenged him to a duel. Lincoln accepted the challenge but wise friends managed to call off the duel. The incident served to break the ice between Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln. Once their relations were resumed, they moved promptly as the following notice, appearing in the *Sangamo Journal* on November 11, 1842, will indicate:

MARRIED: in this city, on the 4th., instant, at the home of N. W. Edwards, Esq., by the Rev. Charles Dresser, Abraham Lincoln to Miss Mary Todd, daughter of Robert S. Todd, Esq., of Lexington, Ky.

Abraham Lincoln was anchored at last. The uncertainty, the emotional ups and downs of eleven years of his young manhood came to an end. There is no evidence whatever that in all the depression and anguish of these troubled years he resorted to religion for solace or put any reliance upon a Power beyond himself. Indeed, Herndon and Lamon, two of the earlier biographers, make him out as an infidel. It is commonly agreed that he did read during the New Salem days Paine's *The Age of Reason* and Volney's *Ruins*. It is even alleged that Lincoln wrote

an essay as a result of his reading of Paine and Volney in which he demonstrated:

“First, that the Bible was not God’s revelation; and

“Secondly, that Jesus was not the Son of God.”

The story goes that Lincoln’s friend, Samuel Hill, snatched the essay away from him and burned it. No tangible evidence of its existence is available. Dr. William E. Barton gallantly assails Herndon and Lamon and offers in rebuttal, through a letter written by Mentor Graham, the New Salem schoolmaster, evidence that Lincoln wrote a little treatise in defense of universal salvation. Since neither document can be produced the debate might as well end. It is not inconceivable that Lincoln wrote both documents. He was fond of polemics. He had a habit of bounding ideas in writing. Certainly he produced nothing profound in this period. Whether he was infidel or Christian, since we do not have his testimony, we do not know. Intolerance thrived on the frontier. An infidel, according to many of the itinerant preachers in Lincoln’s New Salem days, was one who believed that the earth was round. To satisfy their

dogma one had to believe it was flat. A Christian was one who accepted every word in the Bible as literal truth. One could almost prove by the intolerant attitudes of both believers and unbelievers that Lincoln was neither infidel nor Christian.

Too much significance should not be attached to references of a young man to the Deity in his letters, public papers, and addresses. The charge that Lincoln was an infidel, however, should be viewed in the light of the following statements made by him during the period under discussion:

Let those materials be molded into general intelligence, sound morality, and, in particular, a reverence for the Constitution and laws; and that we improved to the last, that we remained free to the last, that we revered his name to the last, that during his long sleep we permitted no hostile foot to pass over or to desecrate his resting place, shall be that which to learn the last trump shall awaken our Washington.

Upon these let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (*Lyceum Address, January 27, 1838*).

We further say that with however much care selections may be made, there will be some unfaith-

ful and dishonest in both classes. The experience of the whole world, in all begone times, proves this true. The Saviour of the world chose twelve disciples, and even one of that small number, selected by superhuman wisdom, turned out a traitor and a devil. And it may not be improper here to add that Judas carried the bag—was the subtreasurer of the Saviour and his disciples. . . .

If ever I feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not wholly unworthy of its almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country, deserted by all the world beside, and I standing up boldly and alone, and hurling defiance at her victorious oppressors (*Speech on Subtreasury, December 20, 1839*).

How true it is that “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” or in other words, that he renders the worst of human conditions tolerable, while he permits the best to be nothing better than tolerable.

Tell your mother I have not got her “present” [an “Oxford” Bible] with me, but I intend to read it regularly when I return home. I doubt not that it is really, as she says, the best cure for the blues, could one but take it according to the truth (*Letter to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841*).

In very truth he was, the noblest work of God—an honest man. . . .

To Almighty God we commend him; and, in His name, implore the aid and protection, of His omnipotent right arm, for his bereaved and disconso-

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late family (*Eulogy on Benjamin Ferguson, February 8, 1842*).

To have expected them to do otherwise than they did—to have expected them not to meet denunciation with denunciation, crimination with crimination, and anathema with anathema—was to expect a reversal of human nature, which is God's decree and can never be reversed. . . .

The universal sense of mankind on any subject is an argument, or at least an influence, not easily overcome. The success of the argument in favor of the existence of an overruling Providence mainly depends upon that sense. . . .

As applying to their cause, they deny the doctrine of unpardonable sin; as in Christianity it is taught, so in this they teach—"While the lamp holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return" (*Temperance Address, February 22, 1842*).

I was always superstitious; I believe God made me one of the instruments of bringing your Fanny and you together, which union I have no doubt he had foreordained. Whatever he designs he will do for me yet. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," is my text just now (*Letter to J. F. Speed, July 4, 1842*).

These utterances of Abraham Lincoln during his young manhood, crude as some of them are, and little as they reveal the literary style of which he later became master, give evi-

dence of his knowledge of the Bible and his disposition to rely upon its fundamental truths in illuminating his discussion of worldly subjects. They do not strengthen the charge that he was an infidel; neither do they give the slightest revelation of a personal faith or of an individual religious fervor. The debate about his faith or his religion, if religion is to be distinguished from faith, at this period in his life is pointless. The undisputed fact remains that he came to his thirty-third year without spiritual awakening, without having experienced "conversion," without public declaration of faith, without church membership and without regular attendance upon religious services.

It is to be observed, however, that he came to his thirty-third year, through a period of successes and failures and great emotional disturbances, with certain assured attributes of personality and character. He had a reputation for absolute honesty. He had an irrepressible urge to give decent account of himself among his fellows. He was a great awkward hulk of a man possessed of unusual physical strength in which he took pride and which he was never known to employ for mean or unworthy ends. Kindness, gentleness, fairness were withal among his outstanding character-

istics. He had the genuine affection, honestly won, of a growing host of friends. His character was unassailed, and his combined qualities of mind and heart and impulse had already singled him out as a young man of greater than ordinary promise. In short, debate about his infidelity or his belief aside, all the positive attributes of the man at thirty-three could be called "Christian."

With all these qualities he had by no means come to the full stature of the man he was to be. He matured slowly. His literary style, as Professor Daniel Kilham Dodge so admirably demonstrated, was an evolution. So were his character, his convictions, his power, his faith. If he had died at thirty-three, he would long since have been forgotten save perhaps for the courage and vision he displayed in recording himself on the slavery question in the General Assembly of Illinois in 1837.

America owes much to Mary Todd Lincoln. Her fiery temperament, her disordered mind, her tragic life and death have left a pathetic picture. Nevertheless, she brought Abraham Lincoln to earth. The doubting, uncertain period of his young manhood came to an end as he stood at the altar with her on November 4, 1842. Henceforth a developing purpose in his life is to be discerned. The full part

her ambition for him played in keeping his own zeal alive and in holding him to a steady course, in spite of defeats and disappointments, can never be known. The enduring convictions of the lawyer and politician, established in the eighteen years they lived together and reared a family in Springfield, date from their wedding day. Those convictions were destined to stand the nation in good stead in its time of greatest need.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONVICTIONS OF THE LAWYER AND POLITICIAN

THE productive period of Lincoln's life may be said to fall chiefly within the eighteen years intervening between his marriage in 1842 and his election to the Presidency in 1860. During that time he established a home of his own, reared a family, became a successful and highly respected leader at the bar in Illinois, steadily interested himself in state and national politics, served a term in Congress, and gradually won distinction in discussion of the public questions of his time centering in the slavery issue. These eighteen years were indispensable in his career in his preparation for the great task that awaited him. They gave him balance, poise, steadiness of purpose, confidence in himself and knowledge of his own powers and the courage to express his irrevocable convictions on vital public issues. These years also brought him a constantly widening acquaintance among the political leaders of the day in his own state and in the nation and won for him wide reputa-



### LINCOLN THE CIRCUIT RIDER

Statue in Carle Park, Urbana, Illinois. Photo used by courtesy of Lorado Taft, Sculptor, Chicago, Illinois.



tion as man of absolute honesty, keen intelligence, and fitness for leadership.

No rosy picture can be painted of Lincoln's home and family life. Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln took up residence immediately after their marriage in the Globe Tavern in Springfield. Here they lived for about a year, paying four dollars a week for board and room for the two of them. They then rented a one-story frame house where they lived for several months. In May, 1844, Lincoln bought a story-and-a-half frame house located on the northeast corner of Jackson and Eighth Streets in Springfield. The purchase price was fifteen hundred dollars. Here the Lincolns lived for sixteen years. This was the only home Lincoln ever owned.

On May 18, 1843, Lincoln wrote to his friend, Joshua F. Speed, in Kentucky:

I reckon it will scarcely be in our power to visit Kentucky this year. Besides poverty and the necessity of attending to business, those "coming events," I suspect, would be somewhat in the way.

Their first son, Robert Todd, came to the Lincolns at the Globe Tavern on August 1, 1843. He was the only child to grow to manhood. He died in Manchester, Vermont, on July 26, 1926. Three other sons were born to

them at their permanent home in Springfield: Edward Baker, March 10, 1846, who died in the house in which he was born on February 1, 1850; William Wallace, December 21, 1850, who died in the White House on February 20, 1862; Thomas, known as "Tad," April 4, 1853, who died in Chicago on July 15, 1871.

There is abundant evidence of Lincoln's devotion to his children and of his deep grief at the death of his second son in 1850 and of "Willie" at the White House in 1862. The record also clearly reveals his unwavering loyalty and faithfulness to Mary Todd. His home was and was not his castle, however. He loved his wife and children and cherished his home, but he had little peace in the family circle. Mary Todd had a temper and was temperamental. Lincoln retreated to the office or to the law circuit with relief. His easygoing habits and his total lack of interest in formal social affairs must have vexed Mary as much as her excitable nature and social ambitions troubled him. No evidence of his ever having "talked back" to his wife in any unseemly way has ever been produced. He seems to have had the wisdom to keep out of the way during her most violent fits of temper. The inherent relation he bore to her throughout their life together was demonstrated when the

news came from Chicago to Springfield on May 18, 1860, that he had been nominated by the Republican party for the Presidency. He was in the office of the *Illinois State Journal* in Springfield when the news of the third and final ballot was received. He did not wait long for the congratulations of his friends and is reported to have said: "There is a little woman over on Eighth Street that will be glad to hear the news; if you'll excuse me, I'll go and tell her."

Considering his fragmentary preparation for the practice of law, Lincoln's reputation as a lawyer developed rapidly. Indeed, his early ability at the bar and the extent of his practice far exceeded his skill at acquiring a competence. On April 15, 1837, the *Sangamo Journal* published the following notice:

J. T. Stuart and A. Lincoln, Attorneys and Counselors at law, will practice, conjointly, in the Courts of this Judicial Circuit. Office No. 4, Hoffman's Row, upstairs, Springfield, April 12, 1837.

This partnership marked the beginning of Lincoln's law practice. It was a most fortunate arrangement for him. Lincoln had known Stuart in the Black Hawk War and in the Illinois Legislature. Stuart was about Lincoln's age but had graduated from college

before coming from Kentucky to Springfield and had already established himself as a lawyer. Stuart was interested in politics and was anxious to go to Congress. His ambition was realized in August, 1838, when he was elected to Congress over Stephen A. Douglas. Stuart was re-elected to Congress in 1840. The management of the office of the firm, and even the conduct of many of its cases, fell rather promptly upon the junior partner.

The practice of the firm was extensive from the beginning. The cases were mainly made up of petty differences and were not especially lucrative. It is said that the income of the partnership never exceeded sixteen hundred dollars a year. The four years he spent with Stuart constituted a sort of practical law course for Lincoln by the case system. He had the benefit of the reputation of his partner, and at the same time he had to stand on his own feet. The partnership was dissolved in 1841 when Stuart returned to Congress for a second term.

There was something almost providential in Lincoln's association with the outstanding men of Illinois in his early years. His association with Stuart had given him a start. On April 14, 1841, Lincoln entered into partnership with Judge Stephen T. Logan under the

firm name of Logan and Lincoln. Logan also hailed from Kentucky. He was about ten years older than Lincoln and had already served two years as Circuit Judge. He stood at the head of the Illinois bar. His office was a veritable training school for young lawyers. Systematic, painstaking, thorough, he insisted that briefs for all cases should be carefully prepared. Lincoln needed and profited by the discipline he got from contact with Logan. He was compelled to give up his disorderly ways for reasoned, methodical procedures. Logan and Lincoln soon became known as one of the leading law firms in Illinois. Lincoln participated personally in thirty-nine Supreme Court cases during this partnership. Logan, as the senior member of the firm, took the lion's share of their income, but Lincoln's earnings for the first time in his career now furnished him with more than the bare necessities of life. The partnership continued for over three years. The exact date of its dissolution seems not to be known but it was late in 1844 or early in 1845. The reason later given by Judge Logan was that he wished to take his son in with him. The fact that the partners were each experiencing the itch to go to Congress may have had something to do with the matter. In any event, they terminated their

relationship amicably. If Lincoln's four years with Stuart were equivalent to a college course in law, surely his three or more years with Judge Logan constituted a splendid postgraduate course. In seven years of tutelage under his well-recognized superiors he had himself become an outstanding member of the Illinois bar.

It is not surprising that he now wished to be his own master. He took as his partner a young, inexperienced man, William H. Herndon, who had studied law in the office of Logan and Lincoln. The firm of Lincoln and Herndon was dissolved by the death of the senior partner at Washington, D. C., on April 15, 1865. Throughout the more than twenty years of their association, Herndon was "Billy" to Lincoln and the senior partner was "Mr. Lincoln" to Herndon. Lincoln divided all the fees equally with Herndon. The firm had plenty of work to do and made a modest living. Herndon was office man and Lincoln the special pleader and circuit rider. He was a familiar figure in court proceedings in the Eighth Judicial Circuit of Illinois, which for the major portion of his circuit-riding days included fourteen counties. His life on the circuit makes up one of the most dramatic phases of his career at the bar and was largely instru-

mental in shaping his character and in developing his rare capacity to deal with all manners of men. It also constituted, perhaps, his happiest professional experience.

Disillusioned in politics, Lincoln's fame as a lawyer really dates from his return in 1849 from his one term in Congress with renewed determination to stick to the law. The practice of the firm was greatly widened and many large business concerns put their legal affairs in Lincoln's hands. The most profitable retainer came from the Illinois Central Railroad. During his most prosperous years Lincoln's income averaged from two to three thousand dollars a year. When he was elected to the Presidency he was worth from ten to fifteen thousand dollars.

Perhaps the most discriminating judgment of Lincoln as a lawyer from one of his contemporaries was made by Justice David Davis, of the Supreme Court of the United States. Justice Davis said:

I enjoyed for over twenty years the personal friendship of Mr. Lincoln. We were admitted to the bar about the same time and traveled for many years what is known in Illinois as the Eighth Judicial Circuit. In 1848, when I first went on the bench, the circuit embraced fourteen counties, and Mr. Lincoln went with the Court to every county.

Railroads were not then in use, and our mode of travel was either on horseback or in buggies.

This simple life he loved, preferring it to the practice of the law in a city, where, although the remuneration would be greater, the opportunity would be less for mixing with the great body of the people, who loved him, and whom he loved. Mr. Lincoln was transferred from the bar of that circuit to the office of President of the United States, having been without official position since he left Congress in 1849. In all the elements that constitute the great lawyer he had few equals. He was great both at *nisi prius* and before an appellate tribunal. He seized the strong points of a cause, and presented them with clearness and great compactness. His mind was logical and direct, and he did not indulge in extraneous discussion. Generalities and platitudes had no charms for him. An unfailing vein of humor never deserted him; and he was always able to chain the attention of court and jury, when the cause was the most uninteresting, by the appropriateness of his anecdotes.

His power of comparison was large, and he rarely failed in a legal discussion to use that mode of reasoning. The framework of his mental and moral being was honesty, and a wrong cause was poorly defended by him. The ability which some eminent lawyers possess, of explaining away the bad points of a cause by ingenious sophistry, was denied him. In order to bring into full activity his great powers it was necessary that he should be convinced of the right and justice of the matter which he advocated. When so convinced, whether the cause was great or small, he was usually successful. He read law-

books but little, except when the cause in hand made it necessary; yet he was usually self-reliant, depending on his own resources, and rarely consulting his brother lawyers, either on the management of his case or on the legal questions involved.

Mr. Lincoln was the fairest and most accommodating of practitioners, granting all favors which he could do consistently with his duty to his client, and rarely availing himself of an unwary oversight of his adversary.

He hated wrong and oppression everywhere; and many a man whose fraudulent conduct was undergoing review in a court of justice has writhed under his terrific indignation and rebukes. He was the most simple and unostentatious of men in his habits, having few wants, and those easily supplied. To his honor be it said, that he never took from a client, even when the cause was gained, more than he thought the service was worth and the client could reasonably afford to pay. The people where he practiced law were not rich, and his charges were always small. When he was elected President, I question whether there was a lawyer in the circuit, who had been at the bar as long a time, whose means were not larger. It did not seem to be one of the purposes of his life to accumulate a fortune. In fact, outside of his profession, he had no knowledge of the way to make money, and he never even attempted it.

Mr. Lincoln was loved by his brethren of the bar; and no body of men will grieve more at his death, or pay more sincere tributes to his memory. His presence on the circuit was watched for with interest, and never failed to produce joy and hilarity.

When casually absent, the spirits of both bar and people were depressed. He was not fond of controversy, and would compromise a lawsuit whenever practicable.

Lincoln always had a yen for public office. When he quit the Illinois Legislature in 1841, he did not lose his interest in politics. From time to time he tried to make himself believe he was out of politics, but he never wholly succeeded. He was no sooner out of the Legislature than he began thinking about going to Congress, and within six months after his marriage he was actually seeking the Whig nomination for Congress. Failing in this attempt, he patiently stayed in Whig party harness and became a Presidential elector in the campaign of 1844. He campaigned vigorously for his idol on the Whig ticket, Henry Clay, and with great regret saw Clay defeated by Polk.

Nothing daunted at the failure of the Whig national ticket, Lincoln continued to work steadily to get the Whig nomination for Congress in 1846. He showered his many acquaintances in the Seventh Congressional District with letters and took the stump whenever opportunity offered. He frightened off all other candidates and was nominated for Congress by acclamation at the Whig Con-

vention at Petersburg on May 1, 1846. He had even taken care that his law partner, Herndon, should be secretary of the Convention. In the midst of his campaign he found the country deeply involved in the War with Mexico. He was elected to Congress on August 3, 1846, by the unprecedented majority of fifteen hundred and eleven votes over his Democratic rival, the Rev. Peter Cartwright, the famous Methodist revivalist, who had defeated him in his first effort to go to the state Legislature fourteen years earlier.

He had plenty of time to meditate upon his victory. The Congress for which he was chosen would not have its first session for more than a year. "Being elected to Congress," he wrote his old friend Speed, "though I am very grateful to our friends for having done it, has not pleased me as much as I expected." While Lincoln was marking time, Stephen A. Douglas was elevated from the House to the United States Senate by the Illinois Legislature on December 14, 1846.

In July, 1847, Lincoln was one of the three delegates from Sangamon County to a monster River and Harbor Convention in Chicago. He thus made his first trip to Chicago by stage at the age of thirty-eight. This is how his personal appearance was then described:

Tall, angular and awkward, he had on a short-waisted, thin swallowtail coat, a short vest of same material, thin pantaloons, scarcely coming down to his ankles, a straw hat and a pair of brogans with woolen socks.

Lincoln took his seat in Congress on December 6, 1847, and sat through two sessions, the first session ending on August 14, 1848, and the short session opening on December 4, 1848, and ending on March 3, 1849. In the meantime Lincoln had participated in the Whig National Convention held in Philadelphia in June, 1848, had worked industriously for the nomination of Zachary Taylor for the Presidency and had campaigned in New England and in Illinois for Taylor and Fillmore, who were nominated at Philadelphia and who were successful at the polls in November, 1848. Lincoln's term in Congress by all methods of reckoning was a flat failure. His principal speech, opposing President Polk's conduct of the Mexican War, undid him completely with his home constituency and resulted in the defeat of his old law partner, Logan, who sought to succeed him in Congress.

Back home in Springfield in April, 1849, Lincoln was indeed a disconsolate ex-congressman. He stubbornly persisted in his desire

for office. Feeling, perhaps justly, that "Old Zack" owed him something, he employed his genius at letterwriting and all the adroit political maneuvering of which he was master to secure appointment as Commissioner of the General Land Office and was ignominiously turned down. There was some talk later of his being given a consolation prize as Governor of the Oregon Territory, but there is no record that he was ever offered the place. He was offered the office of Secretary of Oregon, which he promptly declined.

Thus at forty years of age, deeply depressed and humiliated, he thought his political career was ended. And yet, he kept an eye out for political signals. He wrote and was the first signer of a call to the Whigs of Illinois for a State Convention to be held in Springfield on December 4, 1851, "to take into consideration such action as upon consultation and deliberation may be deemed necessary, proper, and effective for the best interests of the party. . . ." He was a Presidential elector in 1852 and saw the virtual elimination of the Whig party in the defeat of Winfield Scott by Franklin Pierce.

It was not long until Lincoln's perennial desire for office put him on a new trail, as the following letters testify:

LETTER TO CHARLES HOYT

Clinton, De Witt Co., November 10, 1854.

DEAR SIR: You used to express a good deal of partiality for me, and if you are still so, now is the time. Some friends here are really for me, for the U. S. Senate, and I should be very grateful if you could make a mark for me among your members. Please write me at all events giving me the names, post offices, and "*political position*" of members round about you. Direct to Springfield.

Let this be confidential. Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

LETTER TO T. J. HENDERSON

Springfield, November 27, 1854.

MY DEAR SIR: It has come round that a Whig may, by possibility, be elected to the United States Senate; and I want the chance of being the man. You are a member of the legislature, and have a vote to give. Think it over, and see whether you can do better than go for me. Write me at all events, and let this be confidential. Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

Quite unexpectedly and really contrary to his wishes, Lincoln was elected on November 7, 1854, to the very Legislature which was to choose a United States Senator. Feeling that membership in the Legislature would interfere with his senatorial ambitions, he promptly resigned. A bitter contest ensued in the Legislature and Lincoln was obliged to yield

finally in favor of his friend, Lyman Trumbull, who was elected to the Senate, after several sessions and ten ballots, on February 8, 1855.

Lincoln was greatly depressed at this failure and on the surface, at least, put his law practice above his political ambitions. Events moved rapidly for him thereafter, however. Persuaded by his law partner, Herndon, he now gradually eased himself out of his old Whig associations and over into the newly formed Republican party. He was a bit surprised but not distressed when word came back from the first National Republican Convention, held in Philadelphia in June, 1856, that one hundred and ten votes had been cast for him as the Vice-Presidential nominee. John C. Fremont, the Pathfinder, was named to head the ticket and William L. Dayton, of New Jersey, as his running mate. Lincoln threw himself vigorously into the campaign and endeavored to swing the Illinois Whigs over to the support of the Republican ticket. In the famous three-cornered fight which ensued Fremont and Dayton represented the new party, Buchanan and Breckenridge, the Democrats; and Fillmore and Donelson, the American party. Lincoln and many other orators for the new party failed signally in

their chief campaign objectives, for it was really the Whigs who elected Buchanan by dividing their votes largely between him and Fillmore. Lincoln emerged from the campaign well disciplined in defeat but recalling the complimentary vote he had received for the Vice-Presidential nomination at Philadelphia and with an awakening consciousness that there would be chance for him to head the ticket four years hence.

The next step was the inevitable contest with Douglas for the U. S. senatorship in 1858. At the Republican State Convention, held in Springfield on June 16, 1858, this resolution was *unanimously* and enthusiastically adopted:

*Resolved*, That Abraham Lincoln is the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the United States Senate, as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas.

Douglas had been named by the Democrats as their candidate at the State Convention held in Springfield on April 21, though not without a factional fight and a bolt of the Buchanan postmasters and other Federal officeholders.

Thus began the most noteworthy political campaign in American history. Lincoln chal-

lenged Douglas in the great debates that followed. It is now the common judgment of mankind that Lincoln won the debates; but Douglas won the senatorship. On January 6, 1859, the joint ballot of the Legislature gave Douglas fifty-four votes and Lincoln forty-one. It was a strict party vote and the conclusion was known when the November, 1858, election for members of the Legislature was held.

The debates over and the current issue determined, Lincoln had high need of getting back to the law. The situation in which he now found himself is almost pathetically revealed in his response to a request from Norman B. Judd, chairman of the Republican State Committee, for a contribution to help make up the postelection deficit. This is the letter written by the man who was elected President two years later:

Springfield, November 16, 1858.

DEAR SIR: Yours of the 15th is just received. I wrote you the same day. As to the pecuniary matter, I am willing to pay according to my ability; but I am the poorest hand living to get others to pay.

I have been on expenses so long without earning anything that I am absolutely without money now for even household purposes. Still, if you can put in two hundred and fifty dollars for me toward discharging the debt of the committee, I will allow it

when you and I settle the private matter between us.

This, with what I have already paid, and with an outstanding note of mine, will exceed my subscription of five hundred dollars. This, too, is exclusive of my ordinary expenses during the campaign, all of which being added to my loss of time and business, bears pretty heavily upon one no better off in [this] world's goods than I; but as I had the post of honor, it is not for me to be over-nice. You are feeling badly,—“And this too shall pass away,” never fear.

Yours as ever,

A. LINCOLN.

On November 19, 1858, in a letter to A. G. Henry, Lincoln said in part:

I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have had in no other way; and though I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten, I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone.

This was a very humble statement; but the plain truth was, whatever his casual utterances, Lincoln had no intention of sinking out of view. The Presidential bee was already snugly tucked away in his bonnet. The law never again claimed his undivided time. Speeches and letter writing to keep his politi-

cal fences in repair occupied much of his time in ensuing months. The celebrated address at the Cooper Institute on February 27, 1860, introduced him anew to the nation and clearly paved the way for his nomination for the Presidency on the Republican ticket at the Wigwam Convention in Chicago on May 18, 1860. There were four tickets in the field. Lincoln had forced a split in the Democratic party in his debates with Douglas. The Rail-splitter at last triumphed over the Little Giant. When Lincoln stepped forward on the portico of the Capitol to deliver his inaugural address on March 4, 1861, he looked about him in some embarrassment at what to do with his hat. Douglas stepped forward, took the President's hat and held it while he delivered his address.

Lincoln held steadfastly to the slavery issue as the "great and durable question of the age" as he sought office all through these years. The evolution of his thinking on the slavery question may readily be discerned from his letters and public addresses. Biographers and public lecturers have striven to put words into his mouth concerning his views of slavery upon the occasion of his second visit to New Orleans and his solemn vows of what he would some day do to that institution. There is little evi-

dence in support of these alleged utterances. In his autobiographical sketch written in 1860 he refers to both trips to New Orleans and does not mention slavery. In that same sketch he refers to the resolutions on the question of domestic slavery which he and Dan Stone entered upon the Illinois House Journal on March 3, 1837, to which reference has already been made in these pages. It will be remembered that these resolutions held that "slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy," that "the promulgation of Abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils," that the "Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states," and that the "Congress of the United States has the power, under the Constitution, to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, but that the power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of the District."

This was Lincoln's position on the slavery question in 1837. In his short autobiography in referring to this position, he said, "and so far as it goes, it was then the same that it is now."

There is authentic record that as early as 1841 Lincoln had conceived a personal hatred

of slavery. On a steamboat journey from Louisville to Saint Louis in that year in company with his friend, Joshua F. Speed, he had the horrors of slavery ground into his soul. Writing to Speed on August 24, 1855, he recalled their experience together in these words:

You know I dislike slavery, and you fully admit the abstract wrong of it. So far there is no cause of difference. But you say that sooner than yield your legal right to the slave, especially at the bidding of those who are not themselves interested, you would see the Union dissolved. I am not aware that any one is bidding you yield that right; very certainly I am not. I leave that matter entirely to yourself. I also acknowledge your rights and my obligations under the Constitution in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down and caught and carried back to their stripes and unrequited toil; but I bite my lips and keep quiet. In 1841 you and I had together a tedious low-water trip on a steamboat from Louisville to Saint Louis. You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continued torment to me, and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio or any other slave border. It is not fair for you to assume that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable.

In a letter to Williamson Durley on October 3, 1845, Lincoln held it to be the paramount duty of those in the free states to let the slavery of the other states alone, but that, on the other hand, the free states should never lend themselves to prevent slavery from dying a natural death.

Lincoln pondered much in this period on the possibility of the colonization of the Negroes and the annihilation of slavery through this process. In his famous Eulogy on Henry Clay, delivered in the State House at Springfield on July 16, 1852, he referred to Clay's affiliation with the American Colonization Society and declared that it "was one of the most cherished objects of his direct care and consideration." "If," said Lincoln, "as the friends of colonization hope, the present and coming generations of our countrymen shall by any means succeed in freeing our land from the dangerous presence of slavery, and at the same time in restoring a captive people to their long-lost fatherland with bright prospects for the future, and this too so gradually that neither races nor individuals shall have suffered by the change, it will indeed be a glorious consummation."

In his now celebrated speech at Peoria in reply to Senator Douglas on October 16, 1854,

Lincoln branded slavery as a monstrous injustice and said:

Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a "sacred right of self government." These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon; and whoever holds to the one must despise the other.

He was still satisfied, however, to abide the institution of slavery, not on moral grounds, but strictly on legal grounds.

By 1855 Lincoln had completely given up hope of peaceful voluntary emancipation of the slaves. In a letter to George Robertson on August 15 of that year he declared that "The Autocrat of all the Russias will resign his crown and proclaim his subjects free republicans sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves." In this letter he voiced a note of despair and questioned whether the nation could continue together permanently half slave and half free. He confessed that the question was "too mighty" for him and said: "May God, in His mercy, superintend the solution."

A new note appears in the report of an address by Lincoln at Galena, Illinois, on August

1, 1856. He spoke of disunion and particularly addressed himself to those who urged that the election of a President and a Vice-President, both from free states, would result in a dissolution of the Union. "All this talk," he said, "about the dissolution of the Union is humbug, nothing but folly. We do not want to dissolve the Union; you shall not."

In his speech delivered at Springfield, Illinois, at the close of the Republican State Convention which had unanimously named him as the candidate of the Republican party for United States senator, on June 16, 1858, Lincoln's thinking on the slavery question reached a new stage in its evolutionary process. As late as 1856, as has been noted, he questioned whether the nation could endure permanently half slave and half free and committed the answer to his question to the Almighty. Now he was ready to answer that question himself. The Springfield speech marks a milestone in his political career and in his thinking. The courageous words he uttered there against the advice of his friends are now emblazoned in history. He fired the full blast in his opening words, when he said:

We are now into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident

promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

A month later, on July 10, 1858, in a speech at Chicago he went one step further. He then quoted the above extract from his Springfield speech and designated it as a prediction only. He insisted that he did not *then* say that he desired that slavery should be put in course of ultimate extinction. "I do say so, *now*, however," he said, "so there need no longer be any difficulty about that."

It is significant in this connection to observe that Lincoln never had occasion to recall any basic views he ever advanced on the slavery question. His viewpoint developed slowly from his first public declaration in 1837, but

is now seen to be cumulative with no trace of confusion or inconsistency. The great debates with Douglas in the senatorial campaign of 1858 found him with his mind made up. He said nothing in the debates which in substance he had not already said.

Douglas, dodging the moral issue involved in the slavery question, took the position that the people had the right to do as they pleased. If they wanted slavery, they should have it. If they did not want slavery, they were free to refuse to encourage it. He urged that observance of this fundamental principle would bring peace between the North and the South. In the last debate in his rejoinder at Alton, Illinois, on October 15, 1858, Douglas summed up his position in these words:

Mr. Lincoln tries to avoid the main issue by attacking the truth of my proposition, that our fathers made this government divided into free and slave states, recognizing the right of each to decide all its local questions for itself. Did they not thus make it? It is true that they did not establish slavery in any of the states, or abolish it in any of them; but finding thirteen states, twelve of which were slave and one free, they agreed to form a government uniting them together, as they stood, divided into free and slave states, and to guarantee forever to each state the right to do as it pleased on the slavery question. Having thus made the government, and

conferred this right upon each state forever, I assert that this government can exist as they made it, divided into free and slave states, if any one state chooses to retain slavery. He says that he looks forward to a time when slavery shall be abolished everywhere. I look forward to the time when each state shall be allowed to do as it pleases. If it chooses to keep slavery forever, it is not my business, but its own; if it chooses to abolish slavery, it is its own business, not mine. I care more for the great principle of self-government, the right of the people to rule, than I do for all the Negroes in Christendom. I would not endanger the perpetuity of this Union; I would not blot out the great inalienable rights of the white men for all the Negroes that ever existed. Hence, I say, let us maintain this government on the principles on which our fathers made it, recognizing the right of each state to keep slavery as long as its people determine, or to abolish it when they please.

In his reply to the opening speech of Douglas at Alton Lincoln summed up the great issue as he saw it, as follows:

The real issue in this controversy—the one pressing upon every mind—is the sentiment on the part of one class that looks upon the institution of slavery as a wrong, and of another class that does not look upon it as a wrong. The sentiment that contemplates the institution of slavery in this country as a wrong is the sentiment of the Republican party. It is the sentiment around which all their actions, all their arguments, circle; from which all their

propositions radiate. They look upon it as being a moral, social, and political wrong; and while they contemplate it as such, they nevertheless have due regard for its actual existence among us, and the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations thrown about it. Yet having a due regard for these, they desire a policy in regard to it that looks to its not creating any more danger. They insist that it, as far as may be, be treated as a wrong, and one of the methods of treating it as a wrong is to make provision that it shall grow no larger. They also desire a policy that looks to a peaceful end of slavery some time, as being a wrong. These are the views they entertain in regard to it, as I understand them; and all their sentiments, all their arguments and propositions, are brought within this range. . . .

That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to beset the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

Lincoln made other great speeches after the debates in which he still pursued Senator Douglas, notably at Chicago on March 1, 1859; at Columbus, Ohio, on September 16; at Cincinnati, Ohio, on September 17, and several speeches in Kansas in early December. The culmination of his public utterances on the slavery issue, extending over a period of more than twenty years, came in his Cooper Institute Address in New York City on February 27, 1860. Indeed, the Cooper Institute Address may be regarded as the valedictory of his long experience in the discussion of public issues as a private citizen. The measure of the man he had become is to be found in this address. The mere language of it indicates the skill he had acquired in clarity of statement, in simplicity of style and in effective straightforward use of his mother tongue. The orderly, coherent, unassailable logic of it gives evidence of the lawyer and politician at his best. The careful research upon which it was based, the knowledge of the Constitution and the history of his country of which it revealed him possessed, gave the debating lawyer and politician the unmistakable rank of a statesman, and the courage and unabashed naturalness with which he addressed a dis-

tinguished audience in the cultured East singled him out as Presidential timber.

Again he pursued his old political rival and used as his text a statement made by Senator Douglas in a speech at Columbus, Ohio, some months before in which he had said, "Our fathers, when they framed the government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now."

He summed up in this notable address, his outstanding production as a private citizen, the orderly thinking of a lifetime on the greatest issue ever before the American people, in these words:

If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced and swept away. If it is right, we cannot justly object to its nationality—its universality; if it is wrong, they cannot justly insist upon its extension—its enlargement. All they ask we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask they could as readily grant, if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right and our thinking it wrong is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy. Thinking it right, as they do, they are not to blame for desiring its full recognition as being right; but thinking it wrong, as we do, can we yield to them? Can we cast our votes with their view, and against our own? In view of our moral, social, and political responsibilities, can we do this?

Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation; but can we, while our votes will prevent it, allow it to spread into the national territories, and to overrun us here in these free states? If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances whereby we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong: vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of “don’t care” on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said and undo what Washington did.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Lincoln ended the wandering, uncertain stage of his young manhood on November 4, 1842, when he was married to Mary Todd. Eighteen years and two days later he was elected President of the United States. These

eighteen years were busy, crowded years. Home, family, lawoffice, the judicial circuit, politics, Congress, public debate, storytelling and letter writing—for one who never hurried and often just waited, the record of accomplishment is remarkable. There may have been time for spiritual contemplation in these busy years. There may have been time for religious observances. There is little in the record, however, to show that Lincoln relied in any way upon any power beyond himself or had any religious experience in any sense orthodox according to the tenets of any church.

In the early days of their marriage Mrs. Lincoln was a member in good and regular standing in the Episcopal Church in Springfield. Lincoln seldom accompanied her to the services. On February 1, 1850, their second son, Edward Baker, then aged about four, died. The Episcopal minister was out of town and the Rev. James Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, was called in to conduct the funeral service. A warm friendship grew up between him and the family. On April 13, 1852, Mrs. Lincoln joined the First Presbyterian Church on confession of faith. The records of the church show that Thomas Lincoln, "Tad," was bap-

tized on April 4, 1855, and that Lincoln was a pewholder from 1852 to 1861, with his pew-rent paid up to the time he left for Washington. He attended services regularly during this period.

Before becoming the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church at Springfield the Rev. James Smith had published a book entitled *The Christian's Defense*, with a subtitle in these words: "Containing a fair statement and impartial examination of the leading objections urged by infidels against the antiquity, genuineness, credibility, and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; enriched with copious extracts from learned authors."

This book the pastor put into Lincoln's hands and claimed thereafter that Lincoln's views were changed by his study of the book. Writing to William H. Herndon from his native Scotland on January 24, 1867, Doctor Smith said:

It was my honor to place before Mr. Lincoln arguments designed to prove the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, accompanied by the arguments of infidel objectors in their own language. To the arguments on both sides Mr. Lincoln gave a most patient, impartial, and searching investigation. To use his own language, he examined the arguments as a lawyer who is anxious to reach the truth investigates testimony. The result

was the announcement by himself that the argument in favor of the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures was unanswerable.

One can readily understand how a lawyer could reach such a conclusion and still not be touched in any way by his own reasoning. The fact remains that Lincoln made no public acknowledgment of a personal faith and did not join the church at any time thereafter. His reason for never uniting with a church was given to the Hon. Henry C. Deming, a member of Congress from Connecticut. In a memorial address given before the Legislature of Connecticut on June 8, 1865, Mr. Deming said that in reply to his question as to why he had never united with a church, Mr. Lincoln answered:

I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith. When any church will inscribe over its altars, as its sole qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.

Lincoln's letters, papers, and public addresses during these eighteen years of his settled life in Springfield contain many allusions to the Scriptures and to the Deity. An examination of these utterances, however, reveals the fact that most, if indeed, not all of them, were employed by way of illustration to enforce his argument in a purely literary sense. They do not prove anything about his personal beliefs or his inner spiritual experiences. The following quotations, arranged in chronological order, while not complete, represent mainly the allusions he made to the Bible, to the Deity, and to spiritual things from 1842 to 1860.

That "union is strength" is a truth that has been known, illustrated, and declared in various ways and forms in all ages of the world. That great fabulist and philosopher, *Æsop*, illustrated it by his fable of the bundle of sticks; and He whose wisdom surpasses that of all philosophers has declared that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (*Whig Circular*, March 4, 1843).

In the early days of our race the Almighty said to the first of our race, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; and since then, if we except the light and the air of heaven, no good thing has been or can be enjoyed by us without having first cost labor (*Tariff Discussion*, December 1, 1847).

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As a nation should not, and the Almighty will not, be evaded, so let him attempt no evasion—no equivocation. . . .

But if he cannot or will not do this—if on any pretense or no pretense he shall refuse or omit it—then I shall be fully convinced of what I more than suspect already—that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he feels the blood of this war, like the blood of Abel, is crying to Heaven against him. . . .

God grant he may be able to show there is not something about his conscience more painful than all his mental perplexity (*Mexican War Speech, January 12, 1848*).

Then I ask, Is the precept, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” obsolete? Of no force? Of no application? (*Letter to J. M. Peck, May 21, 1848*).

When Columbus first sought this continent—when Christ suffered on the cross—when Moses led Israel through the Red Sea—nay, even when Adam first came from the hand of his Maker: then, as now, Niagara was roaring here (*Notes on Niagara, July 1, 1850*).

Such a man the times have demanded, and such in the providence of God was given us. But he is gone. Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that in future national emergencies He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security (*Eulogy on Henry Clay, July 16, 1852*).

As labor is the common burden of our race, so the effort of some to shift their share of the burden onto the shoulders of others is the great durable curse of the race. Originally a curse for transgression upon the whole race, when, as by slavery, it is concentrated on a part only, it becomes the double-refined curse of God upon his creatures (*Fragment on Slavery, July 1, 1854*).

In the course of my main argument, Judge Douglas interrupted me to say that the principle of the Nebraska bill was very old; that it originated when God made man and placed good and evil before him, allowing him to choose for himself, being responsible for the choice he should make. At the time I thought this was merely playful, and I answered it accordingly. But in his reply to me he renewed it as a serious argument. In seriousness, then, the facts of this proposition are not true as stated. God did not place good and evil before man, telling him to make his choice. On the contrary, he did tell him there was one tree of the fruit of which he should not eat, upon pain of certain death. I should scarcely wish so strong a prohibition against slavery in Nebraska (*Speech at Peoria, October 16, 1854*).

Our political problem now is, "Can we as a nation continue together permanently—forever—half slave and half free?" The problem is too mighty for me—may God, in his mercy, superintend the solution (*Letter to George Robertson, August 15, 1855*).

We can do it. The human heart is with us; God

is with us (*Chicago Banquet Speech, December 10, 1856*).

If men choose to serve you, go with them; but as you have made up your organization upon principle, stand by it; for, as surely as God reigns over you, and has inspired your mind, and given you a sense of propriety, and continues to give you hope, so surely will you still cling to these ideas, and you will at last come back after your wanderings, merely to do your work over again. . . .

I protest, now and forever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I do not want a Negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is that I need not have her for either; but, as God made us separate, we can leave one another alone, and do one another much good thereby. . . .

It is said in one of the admonitions of our Lord, "Be ye [therefore] perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Saviour, I suppose, did not expect that any human creature could be perfect as the Father in heaven; but he said, "As your Father in heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect." He set that up as a standard, and he who did most toward reaching that standard attained the highest degree of moral perfection (*Chicago Speech, July 10, 1858*).

He says I have a proneness for quoting Scripture. If I should do so now, it occurs that perhaps he places himself somewhat upon the ground of the parable of the lost sheep which went astray upon

the mountains, and when the owner of the hundred sheep found the one that was lost, and threw it upon his shoulders, and came home rejoicing, it was said that there was more rejoicing over the one sheep that was lost and had been found, than over the ninety and nine in the fold. The application is made by the Saviour in this parable, thus: "Verily, I say unto you, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

And now if the judge claims the benefit of this parable, let him repent. Let him not come up here and say: "I am the only just person; and you are the ninety-nine sinners!" Repentance before forgiveness is a provision of the Christian system, and on that condition alone will the Republicans grant him forgiveness. . . .

All I ask for the Negro is that if you do not like him, let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy (*Springfield Speech, July 17, 1858*).

I do not suppose that in the most peaceful way ultimate extinction [of slavery] would occur in less than a hundred years at least; but that it will occur in the best way for both races, in God's own good time, I have no doubt (*Rejoinder at Charleston, September 18, 1858*).

The sum of proslavery theology seems to be this: "Slavery is not universally right, nor yet universally wrong; it is better for some people to be slaves; and, in such cases, it is the will of God that they be such."

Certainly there is no contending against the will of God; but still there is some difficulty in ascertaining and applying it to particular cases. For instance, we will suppose the Rev. Doctor Ross has a slave named Sambo, and the question is, "Is it the will of God that Sambo shall remain a slave, or be set free?" The Almighty gives no audible answer to the question, and his revelation, the Bible, gives none—or at most none but such as admits of a squabble as to its meaning; no one thinks of asking Sambo's opinion on it (*Fragment: Notes for Speeches, October 1, 1858*).

Accordingly, speech—articulate sounds rattled off from the tongue—was used by our first parents, and even by Adam before the creation of Eve. He gave names to the animals while she was still a bone in his side; and he broke out quite volubly when she first stood before him, the best present of his Maker. From this it would appear that speech was not an invention of man, but rather the direct gift of his Creator (*Lecture, February 22, 1859*).

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it (*Letter to H. L. Pierce and Others, April 6, 1859*).

These quotations may all be interpreted as impersonal and objective. One additional significant utterance seems to come from the heart and soul of the man rather than merely from his intellect. It constitutes the chief evidence we have down to the time of Lincoln's

election to the Presidency of a personal faith and a belief in immortality. It is to be found in a letter written by Lincoln on January 12, 1851, to his stepbrother, John D. Johnston, upon learning that his father was seriously ill. It read:

Springfield, January 12, 1851

Dear Brother:

On the day before yesterday I received a letter from Harriet, written at Greenup. She says she has just returned from your house, and that father is very low and will hardly recover. She also says you have written me two letters, and that although you do not expect me to come now, you wonder that I do not write.

I received both your letters, and although I have not answered them, it is not because I have forgotten them, or been uninterested about them, but because it appeared to me that I could write nothing which would do any good. You already know I desire that neither father nor mother shall be in want of any comfort, either in health or sickness, while they live; and I feel sure you have not failed to use my name, if necessary, to procure a doctor, or anything else for father in his present sickness. My business is such that I could hardly leave home now, if it was not, as it is, that my own wife is sick-a-bed. (It is a case of baby-sickness, and I suppose is not dangerous.) I sincerely hope father may recover his health, but at all events, tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him

in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our heads, and He will not forget the dying man who puts his trust in Him. Say to him that if we could meet now, it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant, but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them.

Write me again when you receive this.

Affectionately,

A. LINCOLN.

A widely quoted statement attributed to Lincoln is to be found in the now famous interview with him reported by Newton Bateman, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois in 1860, and later President of Knox College. The full account of the interview was first published in Holland's *Life of Lincoln* in 1866. As is well known, during the Presidential campaign of 1860 Lincoln was afforded the use of the Executive Chamber in the State House at Springfield for holding conferences and receptions. Here he frequently met and visited with Mr. Bateman, whose office was next door. It seems that Lincoln was greatly distressed at the discovery that only three of the twenty-three ministers in Springfield expected to vote for him. He talked at length with Mr. Bateman about the

situation and expressed his amazement that so many of the ministers and also many of the prominent church members of the city were against him. Mr. Bateman was reluctant to confirm the interview in all its details in later years but did not hesitate in the version of it first given currency by Holland, to quote Lincoln directly among other utterances as having said:

I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming, and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and work for me—and I think He has—I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it, and Christ is God. I have told them that a house divided against itself can not stand, and Christ and reason say the same; and they will find it so. Douglas doesn't care whether liberty is voted up or voted down, but God cares, and humanity cares, and I care; and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not see the end; but it will come, and I shall be vindicated; and these men will find that they have not read their Bibles aright.

Dr. William E. Barton, in his book on *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*, after exhaustive inquiry and against his own wishes, reached the conclusion that Lincoln never said what was so dramatically attributed to him by Mr. Bateman. He might have used those very words

without inconsistency or hypocrisy. It does not now matter what he said. Herndon declared that Lincoln was an infidel. Lamon repeated the charge. Neither Herndon nor Lamon took the trouble to define what they meant by an infidel. Doctor Barton was well aware that "too much of the effort to prove that Abraham Lincoln was a Christian has begun and ended in the effort to show that on certain theological topics he cherished correct opinions." He avoided effort to prove Lincoln's strict orthodoxy and contented himself with the declaration that:

In the sense which this chapter has endeavored truthfully to set forth, Abraham Lincoln believed in God, in Christ, in the Bible, in prayer, in duty, and in immortality.

What the particular "sense" was which Doctor Barton employed it is difficult to discover even in his closely knit reasoning, and much of the evidence he presents is based on the last five years of Lincoln's life.

Past fifty-one years of age, elected President of the United States, he had not joined a church, he had not professed religion in any public or private way, he had not been "converted" in orthodox style. There is now no serious debate on these points. Moreover, up

to this time there is little evidence that he ever resorted to prayer. In short, at fifty-one he was still self-sufficient, still meeting the trying problems of his life without known reliance upon his Maker. And yet, throughout the eighteen years of his married life in Springfield, there was no day or hour, in his home, in his office, in the courtroom, on the circuit, on the platform, in contact with his fellows, in which his personal life and conduct were not fundamentally and essentially "Christian," as the whole world knows the term. No convincing voice has been raised to the contrary. The convictions, the habits of life and thought of the lawyer and politician were likewise "Christian."

Honesty with others, with himself, with facts, with documents, with issues.

Loyalty and devotion to family, professional associates, friends, state, and nation.

Fidelity to ideals with an independent will and an inflexible purpose.

Simplicity, humility, magnanimity coupled with the inborn capacity to say "No" and stand by it, to say "Yes" and see it through.

Certainty of mind and heart upon what he deemed "the great and durable question of the age" that right made might, and that, slavery being inherently wrong, the nation could

not permanently endure half slave and half free.

These convictions, these attributes of character, these casts of mind and thought, the underlying philosophy of his life were all gradual developments. In an interesting interview reported in the *New York Herald Tribune* on November 3, 1937, two days before her eightieth birthday, Ida M. Tarbell, profound student of Lincoln's time and life, said:

Lincoln is slow as molasses in making up his mind, but when he has thought things out, his ideas are always sound. He knows things have to be worked out gradually and that you cannot bring about reform by ukase.

Elected President of the United States in 1860, he was still making up his mind about his individual relation with his Maker, still undecided as to his personal need of reliance upon Divine Power. The decision he made, the substitution of the will of the Almighty for self, prompts the title of the concluding chapter of this little volume and is now the common heritage of mankind.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SUBLIME FAITH OF THE PRESIDENT

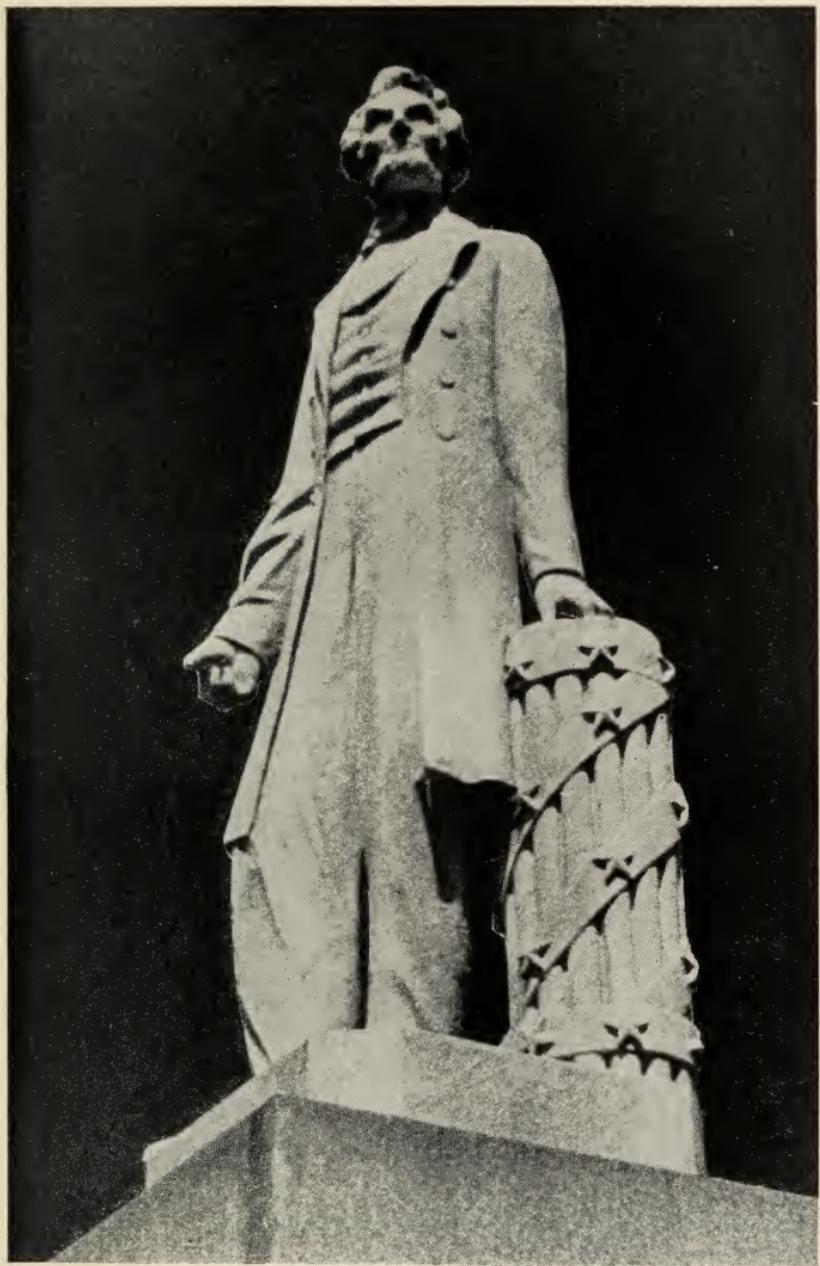
**I**T is not surprising that the solemn responsibility of the Presidency of the United States should change the demeanor of any man. A new note appears in the daily life and conduct of Abraham Lincoln as President. He was past fifty-two when he took office. Throughout his life he had been self-reliant. He was widely known as a man of many moods, which even his closest friends and associates at times could not penetrate. There are very few acts or utterances in his whole career before his election which tend to show that he felt the need of relying in any way upon a Divine Power to meet the issues of the singularly busy life he lived. He may have been God-fearing through all these years; but he certainly gave little evidence of being in personal need of God.

The unmistakable change in his attitude and in his daily conduct came promptly. It was voiced publicly in his letter of acceptance on May 23, 1860, when he implored "the assistance of Divine Providence," and again

in the now familiar, prophetic farewell address to the people of Springfield from the rear of the train upon which he was to begin his memorable journey to Washington on Monday morning, February 11, 1861, the day before his fifty-second birthday. He said:

My friends: No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commanding you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

This was the keynote of several of his short addresses on the journey which ended at Washington on February 23. At Indianapolis he said, "When the people rise in mass in behalf of the Union and the liberties of this country, truly may it be said, 'The gates of hell cannot prevail against them.' "



### **LINCOLN THE PRESIDENT**

Statue in Front of the District of Columbia Court House, Washington, D. C.  
Sculptor, Lot Flannery. Photo by courtesy of Henrietta Calhoun Horner.



At Cincinnati he said, "I take your response as the most reliable evidence that it may be so, trusting, through the good sense of the American people, on all sides of all rivers in America, under the providence of God, who has never deserted us, that we shall again be brethren, forgetting all parties, ignoring all parties."

At Columbus he said, "I turn, then, and look to the American people, and to that God who has never forsaken them."

At Steubenville he said, "Encompassed by vast difficulties as I am, nothing shall be wanting on my part, if sustained by God and the American people."

At Buffalo he said, "I am sure I bring a heart true to the work. For the ability to perform it, I must trust in that Supreme Being who has never forsaken this favored land, through the instrumentality of this great and intelligent people. Without that assistance I shall surely fail; with it, I cannot fail."

At Albany he said, "In the meantime, if we have patience, if we restrain ourselves, if we allow ourselves not to run off in a passion, I still have confidence that the Almighty, the Maker of the universe, will, through the instrumentality of this great and intelligent people, bring us through this as he has through all the other difficulties of our country."

At Trenton he said, "I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty and of this, His almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle."

At Philadelphia he said, "But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by."

At Harrisburg he said, "I feel that, under God, in the strength of the arms and wisdom of the heads of these masses, after all, must be my support."

The pattern thus laid down for himself in approaching the great task that lay before him he followed unbrokenly for the remainder of his days. The self-reliance of the man was gone. Henceforth the President walked hand in hand with his God.

The record is overflowing with uncontested evidence of the sublime faith of Abraham Lincoln in his Maker throughout the four terrible years that marked the end of his career. He learned to pray for himself, for his people and at length for the enemies of the Union he strove to save. He consistently voiced in his inaugurals, in his annual messages to Congress, in official proclamations, and in all his other great public documents his

personal trust in God and his unwavering faith in Divine Providence. He constantly revealed this trust and this faith in his daily dealings with the hundreds of citizens who sought his presence and with the many high officials of the government, and the army and the navy. The trials that were put upon him were almost too much for any human being to endure. Schooled in magnanimity and forbearance, he yet had need of the God upon whom he relied every hour of his Presidency. Let the record now speak largely for itself.

Lincoln exercised an almost uncanny care in his public utterances after he became President. Accustomed for twenty-five years to public speaking and to rough and ready participation in public political debates, he frequently spoke without elaborate preparation and always without apparent hesitation as to the effect of his words. As President he was extremely careful in measuring the effect his official words might bear upon the public opinion of the time and upon the progress and culmination of the great conflict between the North and the South. He made only three really notable addresses, the first inaugural, the Gettysburg address, and the second inaugural. The first inaugural dealt entirely with the situation in which he found

the country and the government on March 4, 1861. He did not fail to give evidence of his reliance upon a Power beyond himself in this address, as these words testify:

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world? In our present differences is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of Nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South, that truth and that justice will surely prevail by the judgment of this great tribunal of the American people.

And before he voiced those familiar kindly words in his conclusion, "I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends," he said:

Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty.

Edward Everett, the chosen orator for the dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery on November 19, 1863, spoke for one hour and fifty-seven minutes in one of the most carefully prepared addresses in his distinguished career upon the public platform. Lincoln spoke for two minutes. Everett was one of the first to discern the deep significance

of the President's brief address. The very next day he wrote a kindly letter to the President in which he said:

I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes.

That central idea, now engraved for all time upon the minds of men, is bound up in the phrase "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom."

The *London Times* called the second inaugural the most sublime state paper of the century.

The *London Standard*, critical of Lincoln at times, said of his second inaugural:

It is the most remarkable thing of the sort ever pronounced by any President of the United States, from the first day until now. Its Alpha and its Omega is *Almighty God*, the God of Justice and the Father of Mercies, who is working out the purpose of his love. It is invested with a dignity and pathos which lift it high above everything of the kind, whether in the Old World or the New. The whole thing puts us in mind of the best men of the English Commonwealth; there is, in fact, much of the old prophet in it.

The central idea in the second inaugural is found in these impassioned utterances of the President:

It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged.

The Almighty has his own purposes.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

More than forty-eight years after Lincoln's death, Lord Curzon, Earl of Kedleston, Chancellor of the University of Oxford, delivered on November 6, 1913, the Rede Lecture before the University of Cambridge on the subject of "Modern Parliamentary Eloquence." He found what he called three "supreme masterpieces" of English eloquence, the toast of William Pitt after the victory of Trafalgar and Lincoln's Gettysburg address and his second inaugural. These two masterpieces, given such high praise by Lord Curzon, mark the heights of the President's intellectual and spiritual power.

There are other abundant evidences in public documents of Lincoln's overwhelming reliance upon Divine Providence. During the four years of his first term Lincoln issued eight official proclamations calling upon the people of the United States to observe fast days, days of prayer and thanksgiving. These proclamations were more than conventional documents couched in formal language. They were human appeals bearing the unmistakable imprint of the President, who chiefly inspired and authorized them. They voiced the personal belief of the individual who was President in the kinship of the whole people with the Almighty and his belief in the efficacy of prayer for himself and for all his fellow citizens. Here is a list of these proclamations with their official titles and dates:

Proclamation of a National Fast Day,  
August 12, 1861.

Proclamation Recommending Thanksgiving for Victories, April 10, 1862.

Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day, March 30, 1863.

Proclamation for Thanksgiving, July 15, 1863.

Proclamation for Thanksgiving, October 3, 1863.

Proclamation for a Day of Prayer, July 7,  
1864.

Proclamation of Thanksgiving, September  
3, 1864.

Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 20,  
1864.

These were formal official proclamations signed by the President and issued by his order by the Secretary of State. Not all of them bear evidence of Lincoln's own handiwork and style. Some of them were undoubtedly prepared for him. That he subscribed wholeheartedly to the sentiments expressed in them there is no question. One of these proclamations, that appointing a national fast day, issued on March 30, 1863, is here reproduced in full. It is typical of all the others and has the unmistakable touch of Lincoln in it.

PROCLAMATION APPOINTING A NA-  
TIONAL FAST-DAY, March 30, 1863

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA

*A Proclamation*

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has by a resolution requested

the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation:

And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

And insomuch as we know that by his divine law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us:

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before

the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness:

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views, of the Senate, I do by this my proclamation designate and set apart Thursday the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting, and prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite at their several places of public worship and their respective homes in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion. All this being done in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President:

William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

That the personal convictions of the Presi-

dent were expressed in these official proclamations is clearly demonstrated in his introductory remarks in his last public address. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865. On April 11, three days before the President was shot at Ford's Theater, a great celebration of the victory was held in Washington. The President spoke from an upper window of the White House overlooking the portico to a great multitude. The principal theme of his last address was the great problem of reconstruction which faced the nation. He opened his last public address with these words:

We meet this evening not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give hope of a righteous and speedy peace, whose joyous expression cannot be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten. A call for a national thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated.

The call for a national thanksgiving was not issued. John Wilkes Booth turned the contemplated days of thanksgiving into the days of the greatest anguish and sorrow that have ever come to the American people.)

If any further proof be needed to demonstrate that these official proclamations ex-

pressed the true inward feeling and sentiment of the President, it may be found in a memorandum discovered among his papers, presumably written on September 30, 1862, entitled "Meditation on the Divine Will." It clearly enunciates the view Lincoln held throughout the Civil War that the hand and will of God were in it. The Meditation reads:

The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect his purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true; that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By his mere great power on the minds of the now contestants, he could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun, he could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds.

The President contemplated an Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure long before he mentioned it even to members of his Cabinet. The sudden collapse of McClellan's Richmond campaign in June, 1862, un-

doubtedly prompted Lincoln to carry out his plan to free the slaves. He gave intimation of what was in his mind to Secretary Seward and Secretary Welles on July 13, and at a Cabinet meeting on July 21 presented various proposed war orders relating to authority for the subsistence of troops in hostile territory, for the employment of Negroes as laborers, for the keeping of accounts of property taken and Negroes employed, and for the colonization of Negroes in some tropical country. On the following day the first three orders were approved and the colonization scheme was dropped. On that day also the President submitted the first draft of an Emancipation Proclamation. This original draft had been prepared without consultation with the Cabinet and completely without its knowledge. The proposed proclamation was put aside on advice of the Cabinet, the suggestion coming from Secretary Seward, until it could be given to the country supported by military success.

That the President took counsel of his Maker in this momentous venture is abundantly proven by the record. The diaries of Secretary Chase and Secretary Welles are in substantial agreement as to what happened at

the Cabinet meeting on September 22, when the emancipation was finally announced. The President opened the meeting by reading a chapter from Artemus Ward. He then clearly indicated that he had brought the Cabinet together not for consultation but to hear what he had determined upon. He was willing to consider suggestions as to minor matters of form, but the main issue he had settled for himself in solemn communion with his God. Secretary Chase recorded his version of the actual words the President used in this connection as follows:

Gentlemen: I have, as you are aware, thought a great deal about the relation of this war to slavery; and you all remember that, several weeks ago, I read to you an order I had prepared on this subject, which, on account of objections made by some of you, was not issued. Ever since then my mind has been much occupied with this subject, and I have thought all along that the time for acting on it might very probably come. I think the time has come now. I wish it was a better time. I wish that we were in a better condition. The action of the army against the rebels has not been quite what I should have best liked. But they have been driven out of Maryland, and Pennsylvania is no longer in danger of invasion. When the rebel army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a proclamation of emancipation such as I thought most likely to be

useful. I said nothing to anyone; but I made the promise to myself, and [hesitating a little] to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise. . . .

Secretary Welles does not quote the President directly in his diary, but he does confirm the version given by Secretary Chase in this statement:

In the course of the discussion on this paper, which was long, earnest, and on the general principle involved, harmonious, he [the President] remarked that he had made a vow, a covenant, that if God gave us the victory in the approaching battle, he would consider it an indication of divine will, and that it was his duty to move forward in the cause of emancipation. It might be thought strange, he said, that he had in this way submitted the disposal of matters when the way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided this question in favor of the slaves. He was satisfied it was right, was confirmed and strengthened in his action by the vow and the results.

The preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was accordingly issued on September 22, 1862, providing "that on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebel-

lion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free. . . .”

Replying to a serenade at the White House on September 24, Lincoln said:

What I did, I did after a very full deliberation, and under a very heavy and solemn sense of responsibility. I can only trust in God I have made no mistake.

In the final immortal document proclaimed on January 1, 1863, the President used these words:

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

Further evidence of the President's constant reliance upon his Maker is to be found in frequent utterances in his messages to Congress.

In his first message to the 37th Congress on July 4, 1861, he made a simple and direct appeal to the people to uphold the Constitution and defend their government and closed with these words:

And having thus chosen our course, without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in

God, and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.

In his annual message to Congress on December 3, 1861, dealing in general with the state of the nation, he opened with this statement:

In the midst of unprecedented political troubles we have cause of great gratitude to God for unusual good health and most abundant harvests.

This message he closed with these words:

With a reliance on Providence all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us.

His message to Congress on March 6, 1862, recommending compensated emancipation, was closed as follows:

In full view of my great responsibility to my God and to my country, I earnestly beg the attention of Congress and the people to the subject.

His annual message to Congress on December 1, 1862, was general in character, but dealt largely with the problems of the Civil War. It began in this way:

Since your last annual assembling another year of health and bountiful harvest has passed; and while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a

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return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light he gives us, trusting that in his own good time and wise way all will yet be well.

This message ended with these words:

The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

The annual message to Congress on December 8, 1863, was general in character. It began with this familiar note:

Another year of health, and of sufficiently abundant harvests, has passed. For these, and especially for the improved condition of our national affairs, our renewed and profoundest gratitude to God is due.

In the body of this message, speaking of the government's obligation to the Indians, the President said:

Sound policy, and our imperative duty to these wards of the government, demand our anxious and constant attention to their material well-being, to their progress in the arts of civilization, and, above all, to that moral training which, under the blessing of Divine Providence, will confer upon them the elevated and sanctifying influences, the hopes and consolations, of the Christian faith.

In his annual message to Congress on De-

ember 6, 1864, which, under God, was to be his last, in his opening words the President said:

Again the blessings of health and abundant harvests claim our profoundest gratitude to Almighty God.

There are yet other documentary evidences of like tenor. Lincoln was frequently called upon to greet delegations of churchmen who came to Washington to give him their views on the conduct of the war or to offer him support and encouragement. He was also obliged often to reply to communications from like groups of citizens.

To a delegation of Evangelical Lutherans of the United States, who waited upon him early in May, 1862, the President said, in part:

You all may recollect that in taking up the sword thus forced into our hands, this government appealed to the prayers of the pious and the good, and declared that it placed its whole dependence upon the favor of God. I now humbly and reverently, in your presence, reiterate the acknowledgment of that dependence, not doubting that, if it shall please the Divine Being who determines the destinies of nations, this shall remain a united people, and that they will, humbly seeking the divine guidance, make their prolonged national existence a source of new benefits to themselves and

their successors, and to all classes and conditions of mankind.

About the middle of May, 1862, the East Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, through a committee of ministers, presented a preamble and resolutions of approval to the President. In the course of his brief reply he wrote:

These kind words of approval, coming from so numerous a body of intelligent Christian people, and so free from all suspicion of sinister motives, are indeed encouraging to me. By the help of an all-wise Providence, I shall endeavor to do my duty, and I shall expect the continuance of your prayers for a right solution of our national difficulties and the restoration of our country to peace and prosperity.

In September, 1862, a delegation of Friends called upon the President and their leader, Mrs. Eliza P. Gurney, presented an address begging him to bring the war to an end. The reply he made was not without appreciative understanding of the devotion of the Friends to peace, but revealed his constant reliance upon Divine Will. He said:

I am glad of this interview, and glad to know that I have your sympathy and prayers. We are indeed going through a great trial—a fiery trial. In

the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out his great purposes, I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to his will, and that it might be so, I have sought his aid; but if, after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, he wills it otherwise. If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced. If I had been allowed my way, this war would have been ended before this; but we find it still continues, and we must believe that he permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe that he who made the world still governs it.

This interview evidently left a very vivid impression upon Lincoln's mind. More than a year later Mrs. Gurney addressed a letter to the President from London. He kept it several months, and on September 4, 1864, replied as follows:

My esteemed Friend: I have not forgotten—probably never shall forget—the very impressive occasion when yourself and friends visited me on a Sabbath forenoon two years ago. Nor has your kind letter, written nearly a year later, ever been forgotten. In all it has been your purpose to strengthen my reliance on God. I am much indebted to the

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good Christian people of the country for their constant prayers and consolations; and to no one of them more than to yourself. The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. We hoped for a happy termination of this terrible war long before this; but God knows best, and has ruled otherwise. We shall yet acknowledge his wisdom, and our own error therein. Meanwhile we must work earnestly in the best lights he gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends he ordains. Surely, he intends some great good to follow this mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal could stay. Your people, the Friends, have had, and are having, a very great trial. On principle and faith opposed to both war and oppression, they can only practically oppose oppression by war. In this hard dilemma some have chosen one horn, and some the other. For those appealing to me on conscientious grounds, I have done, and shall do, the best I could and can, in my own conscience, under my oath to the law. That you believe this I doubt not; and, believing it, I shall still receive for our country and myself your earnest prayers to our Father in heaven. Your sincere friend,

A. LINCOLN.

On January 5, 1863, the President replied to a letter from Caleb Russell and Sallie A. Fenton in these words:

My good Friends: The Honorable Senator Harlan has just placed in my hands your letter of the

27th of December, which I have read with pleasure and gratitude. It is most cheering and encouraging for me to know that in the efforts which I have made and am making for the restoration of a righteous peace to our country, I am upheld and sustained by the good wishes and prayers of God's people. No one is more deeply than myself aware that without His favor our highest wisdom is but as foolishness and that our most strenuous efforts would avail nothing in the shadow of His displeasure. I am conscious of no desire for my country's welfare that is not in consonance with His will, and of no plan upon which we may not ask His blessing. It seems to me that if there be one subject upon which all good men may unitedly agree, it is imploring the gracious favor of the God of Nations upon the struggles our people are making for the preservation of their precious birthright of civil and religious liberty.

Very truly your friend,

A. LINCOLN.

Again, in the latter part of May, 1863, the President received representatives of the Presbyterian General Assembly and in acknowledging the memorial presented by them he said:

This to me is most gratifying, because from the beginning I saw that the issue of our great struggle depended on the divine interposition and favor. If we had that, all would be well. . . . Relying, as I do, upon the Almighty Power, and encouraged as

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I am by these resolutions which you have just read, with the support which I receive from Christian men, I shall not hesitate to use all the means at my control to secure the termination of this rebellion, and will hope for success.

In the course of a long letter to A. G. Hodges, written on April 4, 1864, Lincoln said:

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

On May 14, 1864, a Methodist delegation called again upon the President. Responding to the address presented to him, Lincoln said:

Nobly sustained as the government has been by all the churches, I would utter nothing which might

in the least appear invidious against any. Yet without this it may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, not less devoted than the best, is by its greater numbers the most important of all. It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospital, and more prayers to heaven than any. God bless the Methodist Church. Bless all the churches, and blessed be God, who, in this our great trial, giveth us the churches.

About this time also representatives of the American Baptist Home Mission Society presented a preamble and resolutions to the President. Replying by letter he said:

When, a year or two ago, those professedly holy men of the South met in the semblance of prayer and devotion, and, in the name of Him who said, "As ye would all men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them," appealed to the Christian world to aid them in doing to a whole race of men as they would have no man do unto themselves, to my thinking they condemned and insulted God and His church far more than did Satan when he tempted the Saviour with the kingdoms of the earth. The devil's attempt was no more false, and far less hypocritical. But let me forbear, remembering it is also written, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."

On September 7, 1864, a committee of colored people of Baltimore presented the

President with a Bible. Speaking informally in response he said:

In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man.

All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it. To you I return my most sincere thanks for the very elegant copy of the great Book of God which you present.

In a letter written to Thurlow Weed just thirty days before his death, Lincoln records his overwhelming belief in "a God governing the world." This letter alone taken in connection with his "little notification speech" and the second inaugural, to which it refers, confounds for all time those who would call him an atheist and epitomizes the faith he possessed. It ran as follows:

Dear Mr. Weed: Every one likes a compliment. Thank you for yours on my little notification speech and on the recent inaugural address. I expect the latter to wear as well as—perhaps better than—anything I have produced; but I believe it is not immediately popular. Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world. It is a truth which I thought

needed to be told, and, as whatever of humiliation there is in it falls most directly on myself, I thought others might afford for me to tell it.

Truly yours,

A. LINCOLN.

All the utterances of the President here presented in his public addresses, his official proclamations, his greetings to delegations of churchmen, his letters and other documents, made by a man who had earned the appellation of "Honest Abe" before he came to Washington, must be accepted as a literally truthful expression of the inner personal feelings of the man himself. They cannot be explained away by the possible assumption that they were merely the formal utterances of the President who sought the favor and support of Christian people. Such a view would be nothing short of an insult to the memory of the martyred President whose entire life was characterized by unwavering truthfulness upon all matters of ordinary fact with which he dealt and by scrupulous intellectual honesty in his dealing with great issues and causes. Lincoln was not an actor. When in a public document or before a great assemblage he voiced faith in and dependence upon his Maker, he was not using words for their literary appropriateness or for their oratorical

effect. He was solemnly expressing his true inner self.

It is now commonly agreed that a personal spiritual awakening, such as he had never experienced before, came to Lincoln after the death of his son Willie at the White House on Thursday, February 20, 1862. Strong man that he was and busy as he was day and night with the trials of office, he will-nigh surrendered to his grief at the loss of his son. For several weeks he set apart each Thursday for the indulgence of his grief and did not discontinue the practice until after an intimate talk with the Rev. Francis Vinton, Rector of Trinity Church, New York, who called at the White House at the request of Mrs. Lincoln to console the President. In his account of this incident in his book entitled *Six Months at the White House*, F. B. Carpenter, the artist, says:

Through a member of the family, I have been informed that Mr. Lincoln's views in relation to spiritual things seemed changed from that hour. Certain it is, that thenceforth he ceased the observance of the day of the week upon which his son died, and gradually resumed his accustomed cheerfulness.

Confirmation of the change in Lincoln's spiritual life is to be found in another incident related by Carpenter now commonly ac-

cepted in substance, if not in its exact terms, as authentic. Carpenter's account reads as follows:

The Rev. Mr. Willets, of Brooklyn, gave me an account of a conversation with Mr. Lincoln, on the part of a lady of his acquaintance, connected with the "Christian Commission," who in the prosecution of her duties had several interviews with him. The President, it seemed, had been much impressed with the devotion and earnestness of purpose manifested by the lady, and on one occasion, after she had discharged the object of her visit, he said to her: "Mrs. ——, I have formed a high opinion of your Christian character, and now, as we are alone, I have a mind to ask you to give me, in brief, your idea of what constitutes a true religious experience." The lady replied at some length, stating that, in her judgment, it consisted of a conviction of one's own sinfulness and weakness, and personal need of the Saviour for strength and support; that views of mere doctrine might and would differ, but when one was really brought to feel his need of divine help, and to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance, it was satisfactory evidence of his having been born again. This was the substance of her reply. When she had concluded, Mr. Lincoln was very thoughtful for a few moments. He at length said, very earnestly: "If what you have told me is really a correct view of this great subject, I think I can say with sincerity, that I hope I am a Christian. I had lived," he continued, "until my boy Willie died, without realizing fully these things. That blow overwhelmed me. It showed me my weakness

as I have never felt it before, and if I can take what you have stated as a test, I think I can safely say that I know something of that change of which you speak; and I will further add, that it has been my intention for some time, at a suitable opportunity, to make a public religious profession."

Lincoln did not, however, at any time in his life make "a public religious profession." He did not join a church in Washington, although he regularly attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and formed a close attachment to the minister, the Rev. Phineas D. Gurley. Eight years after Lincoln's death, Doctor Gurley had this to say in an article in Scribner's *Monthly*:

I have had frequent and intimate conversations with him on the subject of the Bible and the Christian religion, when he could have had no motive to deceive me, and I considered him sound, not only on the truth of the Christian religion, but on all its fundamental doctrines and teachings. And, more than that, in the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son Willie, and his visit to the battlefield of Gettysburg, he said, with tears in his eyes, that he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed and that he loved the Saviour, and, if he was not deceived in himself, it was his intention soon to make a profession of religion.

Additional evidence of Lincoln's constant

reliance upon a Power beyond himself throughout his Presidency may be found in his dealings with the members of his Cabinet, with the officers of the army and the navy, with other public officials and with distinguished private citizens. One illustration along this line must serve in this connection.

William H. Seward was the idol of the new Republican party in the East in 1860, and it was generally expected that he would be the choice of the party for President at the Wigwam Convention in Chicago in May of that year. Seward had already had a distinguished career extending over thirty years of active political life. A graduate of Union College, he was admitted to the bar in New York state at the age of twenty-one. He early gained distinction as a lawyer and at the age of twenty-nine was elected to the state Senate, serving four years. At thirty-seven years of age, in 1838, he was elected governor of the state of New York and was re-elected in 1840 for a second term. In 1849 the Whigs in the state Legislature sent Seward to the United States Senate, where he served for two terms. In the fullness of his powers at sixty years of age, one of the leading statesmen of the nation, he confidently expected that he would be nominated

for the Presidency by the Republicans in 1860.

Seward accepted the proffer of the portfolio of Secretary of State which Lincoln promptly offered him after the election in November, 1860, with reluctance and misgivings and undertook to withdraw at the last moment before the inauguration. Lincoln prevailed upon him finally to accept the post, and he did so with the earnest conviction that he was to be the power behind the throne. Shortly after the inauguration, saturated with this idea, he wrote to Mrs. Seward:

The President is determined that he will have a compound Cabinet; and that it shall be peaceful, and even permanent. I was at one time on the point of refusing—nay, I did refuse, for a time, to hazard myself in the experiment. But a distracted country appeared before me, and I withdrew from that position. I believe I can endure as much as any one; and may be I can endure enough to make the experiment successful. At all events, I did not dare to go home, or to England, and leave the country to chance.

In this exalted frame of mind the distinguished Secretary of State penned one of the strangest documents in our history. Feeling as he apparently did that the primary responsibility for the conduct of the government

rested upon him, on April 1, 1861, he submitted a memorandum to the President, entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration," which read as follows:

*First.* We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign.

*Second.* This, however, is not culpable, and it has even been unavoidable. The presence of the Senate, with the need to meet applications for patronage, have prevented attention to other and more grave matters.

*Third.* But further delay to adopt and prosecute our policies for both domestic and foreign affairs would not only bring scandal on the administration, but danger upon the country.

*Fourth.* To do this we must dismiss the applicants for office. But how? I suggest that we make the local appointments forthwith, leaving foreign or general ones for ulterior and occasional action.

*Fifth.* The policy at home. I am aware that my views are singular, and perhaps not sufficiently explained. My system is built upon this idea as a ruling one, namely, that we must

CHANGE THE QUESTION BEFORE THE PUBLIC FROM ONE UPON SLAVERY, OR ABOUT SLAVERY, for a question upon UNION OR DISUNION:

In other words, from what would be regarded as a party question, to one of patriotism or union.

~ The occupation or evacuation of Fort Sumter, although not in fact a slavery or a party question, is so regarded. Witness the temper manifested by

the Republicans in the free States, and even by the Union men in the South.

I would therefore terminate it as a safe means for changing the issue. I deem it fortunate that the last administration created the necessity.

For the rest, I would simultaneously defend and reinforce all the ports in the gulf, and have the navy recalled from foreign stations to be prepared for a blockade. Put the island of Key West under martial law.

This will raise distinctly the question of union or disunion. I would maintain every fort and possession in the South.

#### FOR FOREIGN NATIONS

I would demand explanations from Spain and France, categorically, at once.

I would seek explanations from Great Britain and Russia, and send agents into Canada, Mexico, and Central America to rouse a vigorous continental spirit of independence on this continent against European intervention.

And, if satisfactory explanations are not received from Spain and France,

Would convene Congress and declare war against them.

But whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

Devolve it on some member of his cabinet. Once

adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide.

It is not in my especial province;

But I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility.

We shall never know all that took place in the mind of the President when he read this amazing document from his Secretary of State. It must be remembered that this brazenly expressed willingness to assume the reins of government came to the President from a man who greatly outranked him in education and in social experience, in high public service as governor of a great state, as United States senator, and, in the judgment of many conspicuous politicians in his own party, especially in the powerful East, in statesmanship and in forceful qualities of leadership.

The President took no counsel of which we know, but he acted promptly. Before night-fall the Secretary had the President's reply, which read:

Executive Mansion, April 1, 1861.

*My dear Sir:* Since parting with you I have been considering your paper dated this day, and entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration." The first proposition in it is, "First, We are at the end of a month's administration, and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign."

At the beginning of that month, in the inaugural, I said: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts." This had your distinct approval at the time; and, taken in connection with the order I immediately gave General Scott, directing him to employ every means in his power to strengthen and hold the forts, comprises the exact domestic policy you now urge, with the single exception that it does not propose to abandon Fort Sumter.

Again, I do not perceive how the reinforcement of Fort Sumter would be done on a slavery or a party issue, while that of Fort Pickens would be on a more national and patriotic one.

The news received yesterday in regard to St. Domingo certainly brings a new item within the range of our foreign policy; but up to that time we have been preparing circulars and instructions to ministers and the like, all in perfect harmony, without even a suggestion that we had no foreign policy.

Upon your closing propositions—that "whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it.

"For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

"Devolve it on some member of his cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree and abide"—I remark that if this must be done, I must do it. When a general line of policy is adopted, I

apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the cabinet.

Your obedient servant,

A. LINCOLN.

The full measure of Abraham Lincoln is to be found in the way he dealt with this incident. There is no record that he ever referred to the matter again with Seward or that he ever mentioned it to other members of the Cabinet. Seward's memorandum and the President's reply were tucked away in the files and not given to the world by Nicolay and Hay until long after the death of both President and Secretary. It may well be urged that when Lincoln penned the line, "*I remark that if this must be done, I must do it,*" he became President in fact as well as in title. There were many high points in his career. This utterance on April 1, 1861, in some ways marks one of the great peaks, if not the summit, of his life. When he said, "*I must do it,*" he was not acting alone. If we could penetrate into the silence which surrounds what Lincoln thought and did on that day, it is not an unwarranted assumption, in the light of what we do know about his daily conduct from 1861

to 1865, that he took counsel with the Divine Being before he decided to put the Secretary in his place.

Seward, as Lincoln had no doubt anticipated, was wise enough to discern who was to be President. His subsequent conduct goes far toward atoning for his temporary aberration. Shortly after receiving the President's reply he wrote to Mrs. Seward:

Executive skill and vigor are rare qualities. The President is the best of us.

He found his place and kept it. Rare discrimination was used in the choice of words engraved on the stone that marks his resting place in the cemetery at Auburn, New York. The words are: "He was faithful."

It remains finally in this account to summon the judgment of those who knew Lincoln best and who did not hesitate to record themselves.

William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for the last twenty years of his life, was always skeptical about Lincoln's personal beliefs in the tenets of Christianity, and yet said this of his religious views:

The world has always insisted on making an orthodox Christian of him, and to analyze his sayings or sound his beliefs is but to break the idol. It only

remains to say that, whether orthodox or not, he believed in God and immortality; and even if he questioned the existence of future eternal punishment he hoped to find a rest from trouble and a heaven beyond the grave. If at any time in his life he was skeptical of the divine origin of the Bible he ought not for that reason to be condemned; for he accepted the practical precepts of that great book as binding alike upon his head and his conscience. The benevolence of his impulses, the seriousness of his convictions, and the nobility of his character are evidences unimpeachable that his soul was ever filled with the exalted purity and sublime faith of natural religion.

Jesse W. Fell, a strong political supporter and close personal friend of Lincoln, who was the first publicly to urge him as the Republican candidate for President, in a statement on his religious opinions, declared that Lincoln "did not believe in what are regarded as the orthodox or evangelical views of Christianity," that "his expressed views on these and kindred topics were such as, in the estimation of most believers, would place him entirely outside the Christian pale," and nevertheless went on to say:

Yet, to my mind, such was not the true position, since his principles and practices and the spirit of his whole life were of the very kind we universally agree to call Christian; and I think this conclusion

is in no wise affected by the circumstance that he never attached himself to any religious society whatever.

His religious views were eminently practical, and are summed up, as I think, in these two propositions: "The Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man." He fully believed in a superintending and overruling Providence, that guides and controls the operations of the world, but maintained that law and order, and not their violation or suspension, are the appointed means by which this Providence is exercised.

The Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, a member of Congress from Illinois during the Civil War, who knew Lincoln intimately, in his *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, said:

No more reverent Christian than he ever sat in the executive chair, not excepting Washington. He was by nature religious; full of religious sentiment. The veil between him and the supernatural was very thin. It is not claimed that he was orthodox. For creeds and dogmas he cared little. But in the great fundamental principles of religion, of the Christian religion, he was a firm believer. Belief in the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, in the Bible as the revelation of God to man, in the efficacy and duty of prayer, in reverence toward the Almighty, and in love and charity to man, was the basis of his religion.

Major Henry C. Whitney, who traveled with Lincoln as a fellow lawyer in the eighth

judicial district of Illinois, in his book, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, said:

The conclusion is inevitable, that Mr. Lincoln was practically and essentially, though not ritualistically a Christian. . . . On the evidences which he himself furnished, I must believe, and cannot doubt, that, although he was not a formal or ritualistic Christian, yet that no man in any age more closely obeyed the divine precepts or walked more closely to God than he.

Similar declarations could be summoned from many other sources. His own words and conduct, the unchallenged public record and the views of those who knew him intimately alike reveal the essence and quality of his faith.

The cornerstone of the memorial hall near Hodgenville, Kentucky, which shelters the remains of the log cabin in which Lincoln was born, was laid by Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, on February 12, 1909, one hundred years from the day of Lincoln's birth. Linking the names of Washington and Lincoln in his memorable address on that occasion, President Roosevelt said:

As a people we are indeed beyond measure fortunate in the characters of the two greatest of our public men, Washington and Lincoln. Widely though they differed in externals, the Virginia landed gentleman and the Kentucky backwoods-

man, they were alike in essentials, they were alike in the great qualities which made each able to do service to his nation and to all mankind such as no other man of his generation could or did render. Each had lofty ideals, but each in striving to attain these lofty ideals was guided by the soundest common sense. Each possessed inflexible courage in adversity, and a soul wholly unspoiled by prosperity. Each possessed all the gentler virtues commonly exhibited by good men who lack rugged strength of character. Each possessed also all the strong qualities commonly exhibited by those towering masters of mankind who have too often shown themselves devoid of so much as the understanding of the words by which we signify the qualities of duty, of mercy, of devotion to the right, of lofty disinterestedness in battling for the good of others. *There have been other men as great and other men as good; but in all the history of mankind there are no other two great men as good as these, no other two good men as great.*

It matters little, as these lines are being written, nearly seventy-three years after Lincoln's death, that he had no genuine spiritual awakening in his boyhood or youth. It matters little that some men who knew him in the New Salem and in the Springfield days declared him to be an infidel. It matters little that he did not join a church and that he did not attend church services regularly until his later years. It matters little that many zealous

churchmen have labored in vain to prove him an orthodox Christian in the terms of their particular creeds. It matters little that he was in no sense a theologian and that his intimate personal beliefs were never given to the world.

When he set out for Washington in February, 1861, he said to his friends and neighbors at Springfield that the task before him was greater than that which rested upon Washington. History confirms that view. He said also that without the assistance of the Divine Being who ever attended Washington he could not succeed. The record is unmistakable from that day forth that his chief reliance was in the Divine Being. Here admittedly is the greatest figure in our history since Washington. Here is perhaps the greatest figure in the nineteenth century, and here we now know is one of the truly great figures in all the history of mankind. This great and good man, bearing the burdens of the Presidency in our bitterest national trial, in the fullness of his career, declared:

(I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.)

The faith of the President was sublime.



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